



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

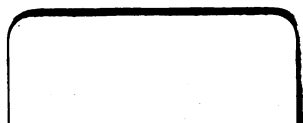
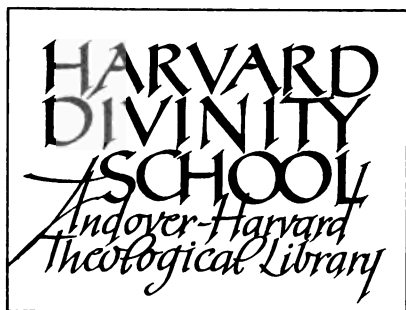
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

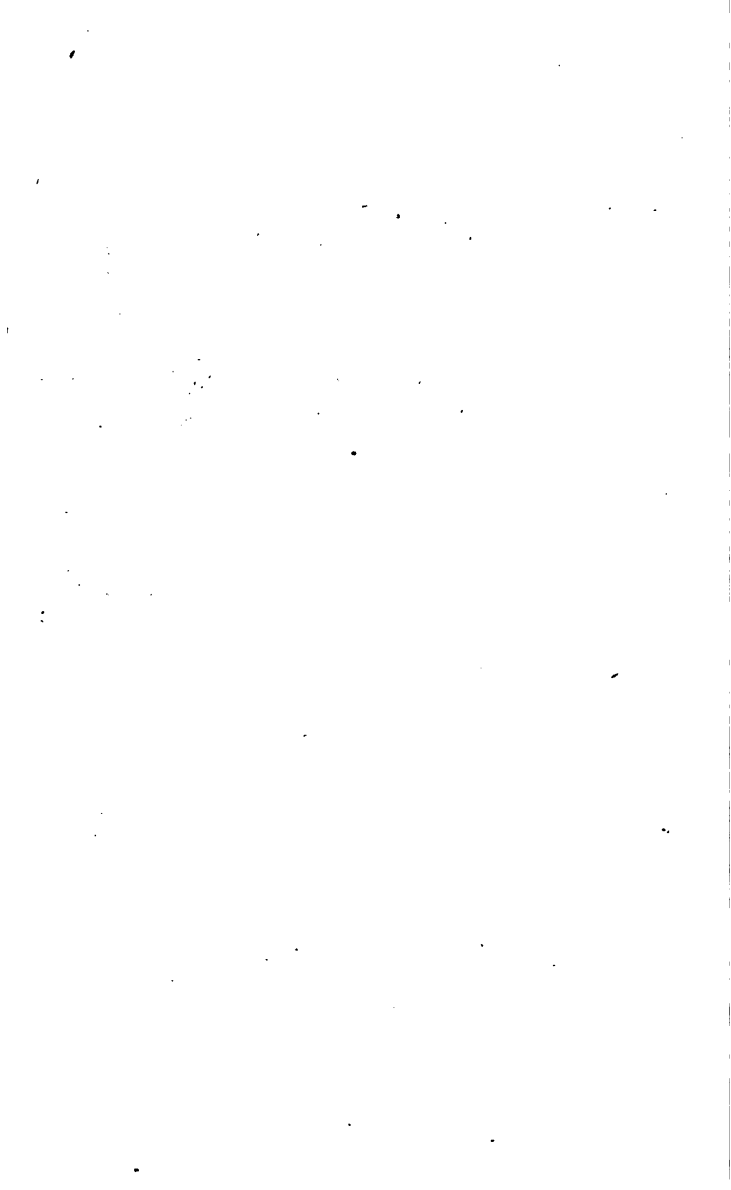
- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



Maria W. Bradford
from
a C. B.



0

LAST THOUGHTS,

ON

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS,

IN THREE PARTS.

I. MAN'S LIABILITY TO SIN.

II. SUPPLEMENTAL ILLUSTRATIONS.

III. MAN'S CAPACITY TO OBEY.

BY NOAH WORCESTER, D. D.

Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? ABRAHAM.

CAMBRIDGE:

BROWN, SHATTUCK, AND CO.

1833.

1901, June 17.
From
Laurence Bradford
of Duxbury.

FEB 11 1902

(961)

Entered according to act of Congress in the year 1833,

By NOAH WORCHESTER, D. D.

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Massachusetts.

BOSTON.
FREEMAN AND BOLLERS.

1030
23-2

649

Warrister

Cop. 1

PREFACE.

THIS volume is a collection of papers, written within the last three years, on questions relating to Man's Liability to Sin, and his Capacity to Obey. Several of them were intended for distinct and separate publications, and not as a part of the present volume. These facts may account for some repetitions, which might otherwise have been avoided.

In examining the opinions of others, I should have forbore to name sects or persons, could this have been done to advantage; but as it could not, I have aimed to do as I would that others should do unto me. I have aimed to state their opinions fairly,—to examine them impartially,—to approve what appeared to me correct,—and to express with candor my dissent from what appeared erroneous,—forbearing to impeach the character or the motives of any one from whom I have dissented. This, it is believed, will be the general mode of writing on controversial subjects, when the spirit of Christianity shall have its due influence. In view of the love and kindness of Christ towards his apostles, while he knew them to be in very great errors, and of the mercy of God towards us all, notwithstanding our innumerable mistakes, who shall dare to judge, censure, and reproach his brother, on account of his supposed erroneous opinions? How forcible are the expostulations of Paul addressed to censorious brethren:—“Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?—Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.” Yes, we must all appear before Him who gave

the "new commandment"—saying—"This is my commandment, that ye love one another *as I have loved you.*" But with what face can I appear before him, if I am so destitute of love to my brethren, that I cannot examine such of their opinions as appear to me erroneous, without aiming the dagger of calumny against their characters? When ministers of the gospel, on account of difference of opinion, employ these moral daggers to wound or destroy a brother's reputation, they are perhaps often more guilty in the sight of God than military men generally are when they employ guns and bayonets for the destruction of human life. It has been my prayer that, whatever may be my errors on doctrinal subjects, I may be saved from such errors of temper and practice.

N. WORCESTER.

Brighton, Aug. 1833.

CONTENTS.

Preface.	iii
-----------------	-----

PART I.—MAN'S LIABILITY TO SIN.

Chap. I. Preliminary Observations.	1
II. Sources of Man's liability to Sin.	12
III. Preceding hypothesis enforced.	23
IV. Necessary cautions and illustrations.	34
V. Origin of human selfishness.	38
VI. The moral disease as explained by the Messiah.	48
VII. Paul's account of Adam's sin and its consequences.	60
VIII. The phrase "by nature."	69
IX. On Gen. xi. 5, 12; and Psalms xiv. 2, 3.	77
X. On Rom. viii. 7, and James iv. 4.	82
XI. Influence of different hypotheses.	86
XII. Facts accounted for.	90
XIII. Supposed fundamental doctrines.	95
XIV. Advantages of the proposed hypothesis.	99

PART II.—SUPPLEMENTAL ILLUSTRATIONS.

No. I. Remarkable Individuals.	109
II. New Haven Theory of Human Depravity.	113
III. Disputed hypotheses on the existence of moral evil.	124
IV. Paul's philosophy of the flesh and mind.	133
V. Combe on the Constitution of Man.	137
VI. Popular hypotheses.	143
VII. Reasoning of Dr. Hopkins.	147
VIII. Divine Constitution, and early history of Man.	154
IX. The Divine Constitution vindicated.	159

X. Reasons for the second Commandment.	167
XI. Coleridge on original Sin.	172
XII. Parental affection.	180
XIII. Conscience.	183
XIV. Regeneration.	190
XV. Review of a modern substitute for a supposed sinful nature.	207
XVI. Dr. Spring's theory of "Native Depravity."	239
Dr. Beecher's sermon.	263

PART III.—MAN'S CAPACITY TO OBEY.

Chap. I. Man's capacity consistent with dependence, commensurate with duty.	281
II. The title explained.	285
III. The revealed principle in divine govern- ment.	289
IV. The ground of the first objection examined.	294
V. The second objection examined—and fur- ther remarks on the use of <i>can</i> and <i>cannot</i> .	298
VI. Several causes of the prevalent impression.	303
VII. The tendency of the prevalent belief.	307
VIII. Illustrations from the nature of sin.	312
IX. Views of the Christian Spectator and Dr. Woods.	316
Concluding remarks.	321

LAST THOUGHTS.

PART I.

MAN'S LIABILITY TO SIN.

CHAP. I.

Preliminary Observations.

IN the Bible God is represented to us as a just and merciful Sovereign, and a tender Father—as slow to anger, ready to forgive, and one who does good even to the evil and unthankful. In a word, “God is love.” We may hence safely infer, that the doctrines and precepts of the gospel, when correctly understood, will be found consistent with this benign character.

In all our inquiries, however, it is proper that our minds should be deeply impressed with these truths, that “God is greater than man,”—that his government is of universal extent and unlimited duration,—and that the wisest of men are very liable to misjudge in regard to what it may be proper for God to do in governing the universe. Humility and caution, therefore, ever become us, in our researches, and in judging of such facts and

doctrines as have been supposed to be revealed in the scriptures. Still, as God condescends to reason with us as intelligent beings, and sometimes even appeals to our consciences, as to the equity of his conduct, it seems proper that we should employ our rational faculties in humble endeavors to ascertain what doctrines he has revealed, and the reasonableness of them. Two considerations occur to enforce this duty.

1. The doctrines of Scripture are motives for submission and obedience to the divine will. It is hence desirable that we should understand these doctrines, that they may have a due influence on our minds.

2. Since the Christian world has been divided into sects, the children of different sects have been taught different and even opposite doctrines. Many of them must of course have been educated in some serious errors of opinion; nor is it improbable that such has been the fact in every denomination. What then can be more obvious than that it is the duty of adult persons, carefully to inquire for themselves, whether they have not received by tradition erroneous opinions for divine truths. To make such inquiries implies no disrespect to the Bible. On the contrary, true love to God and the scriptures will dispose us so to do. To refuse to do it, from a respect to a traditionary creed, or its authors or abettors, is to prefer the words of man's wisdom to the oracles of God, or to degrade our own understanding by a servile reliance on the dictates of others, who are fallible like ourselves.

Such doctrines as seem to us to imply that God

is not so benevolent as he has declared himself to be, may, in a special manner, demand a solemn inquiry, whether they did not originate in misinterpretations of the scripture. For while they appear to us to ascribe to God a vindictive or revengeful character, they can be of no force to excite in us the spirit of love and cheerful obedience. Their tendency must rather be to diminish or prevent that love which would otherwise flow from a pious and grateful heart. Besides, so far as God appears to our minds of a stern, unpitying or revengeful character, we shall be in danger of forming a similar disposition. For it is hardly to be expected that any one will feel under obligations to cultivate in his own breast a more kind and forgiving spirit than that which he habitually ascribes to his Maker.

From childhood I grew up with deep reverence for the scriptures, as the oracles of God, and as containing the words of eternal life. I was also taught to venerate the shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly, as containing a correct view of the principal doctrines of the gospel. For the greater part of my life two doctrines of the Catechism occasioned me much embarrassment, as often as I made them the subjects of serious reflection—because they appeared to me to ascribe to God such a character as is inconsistent with perfect benevolence. During that period, however, I was disposed to account for my embarrassment on the ground of my own imperfection—my want of a full view of the whole ground. But the more I reflected, the more I was embarrassed, till I sought relief by a laborious examination of the scriptures. Two

questions will suggest the grounds of my embarrassment, and the doctrines of the Catechism from which the queries arose.

1. Admitting that our first parents did eat of forbidden fruit, could it be on that account, consistent with the character of a merciful Father, for God to cause all our race to come into existence under "his wrath and curse," and with a nature wholly sinful?

2. Admitting that the Messiah so loved us as to sacrifice his life for our salvation, could it be consistent with forgiving love and mercy, that God should inflict on his Son the *punishment* due for our offences, that the penitent might be pardoned?

Prior to entering on the work of the ministry I had relinquished several ideas which are contained in the Catechism, relating to the fall and the atonement, and had embraced the Hopkinsian views of these subjects. Still the embarrassing questions occurred. Nor can I doubt that these questions have been embarrassing to many others, as well as to myself.

The result of my inquiries relating to vicarious punishment, was published in the work entitled "The Atoning Sacrifice, a Display of Love, not of Wrath." Scarcely had I completed that work, when my mind seemed to be in a special manner turned to the subject of the first of the two embarrassing questions. For on this point I had not then obtained very satisfactory views. That mankind have been to a great extent a depraved race of beings was in my view too obvious to be denied. But that this depravity, or man's liability to sin,

should be ascribed to God's displeasure, on account of Adam's offence, was to me a dreadful idea — one which I could not reconcile with either benignity or justice. Yet in one form or another this seems to have been the popular belief for ages. The effect supposed to be produced by divine displeasure was ever shocking to my mind. 'And why' should it not be so? What can be more shocking than the idea that God should, on account of the *first* sin of the *first* man, doom all his posterity to be born with a nature wholly sinful? Is this consistent with being "slow to anger, long-suffering, and ready to pardon?" Could such an act display the heart of a merciful Father?

Though prior to engaging in the ministry I had discarded the doctrine that Adam's posterity "sinned in him and fell with him," and also the doctrine of imputation, I still retained the Hopkinsian idea of an "established connexion" between the sin of Adam and the first moral exercises of his posterity. My views at that period were very similar to those more recently published by Dr. Taylor and his New Haven associates. Subsequent inquiries, however, had in some respects modified my views of the consequences of Adam's sin, before I wrote the work on the Atoning Sacrifice. On inquiry I could find no proof of the supposed "established connexion." But the universal liability of mankind to sin was too obvious to be questioned; and how to account for this but by the displeasure of God, was still to me an insurmountable difficulty. With this difficulty on my mind I commenced a series of inquiries relating to the *sources* of human depravity, and the im-

portance of christian education. Month after month I examined the scriptures, and wrote on different questions. On several points I obtained much satisfaction. Still, however, the question occurred, "How could it be consistent with divine goodness that all the posterity of Adam should be subjected to such a state of liability to sin as is witnessed in every quarter of the world?"

With this question I was embarrassed till early in June, 1830. Then, while intensely pursuing the inquiry, with ardent desires for light, the following questions occurred with the suddenness of lightning: "Does not liability to sin result from the kindness of God—the numerous favors which he bestows upon us, and not from his displeasure? And on due inquiry will not this be found to be the fact, as the Atoning Sacrifice was found to be a 'display of love, not of wrath?'"

These questions occurred in such a manner, and with what appeared to me such a divine light, that I could not but regard them as the suggestions of the Divine Spirit—the Comforter which was promised by Christ to *teach us all things*. I had little time for reflection before a new, spacious and delightful field of contemplation and inquiry was opened to my view, which I have endeavored to portray in the following chapters. Immediately I took my pen to sketch the thoughts which had occurred, that nothing might be lost; and I wrote with such freedom and delight as I had seldom before experienced. I seemed to myself to have entered a new world of thought and reflection. At every advancing step, the character of God, like the

path of the just, seemed to shine brighter and brighter; and the guilt and inexcusableness of sin was more and more manifest.

My reading has been too limited for me to say, that other writers have not given a view of the subject similar to the one which may be seen in the following pages. But if they have, I am confident that what they wrote was never read by me. Had such views been presented to my mind forty or even ten years ago, they would have saved me from much perplexity and intense study. But if the views obtained are the truth, they are worth more than all the expense I have been at to obtain them. I must, however, gratefully acknowledge, that they seem to me rather as special favors from Heaven, than as the fruits of my own researches. Yet, when discovered, the theory appears so natural, the solution of the difficulty so plain, that I cannot but feel amazed that it did not occur to my mind many years ago.

Soon after I commenced my recent inquiries on the sources of human depravity, I ascertained some facts which seemed to me important. One was this, that Paul was the *only* inspired writer who mentioned the moral consequences of Adam's sin, or even intimated any connexion between his sin and the moral character of his posterity. Another was that, according to Paul's own account, the "many are made righteous by the obedience of Christ," as the many were "made sinners" by the disobedience of Adam. How then are the many made righteous by the obedience of Christ? Surely it is not by deriving from him a righteous nature by "ordinary

generation;" but by the moral influence of his obedience, instructions, sufferings and example. The inference seems to be clear, that it was by a moral influence that the disobedience of Adam made many sinners. Other important facts which I soon ascertained were these; that the Messiah never so much as alluded to the sin of Adam in any of his discourses, nor even mentioned his name; but on different occasions he spoke of "little children" in a manner which seemed to me clearly inconsistent with the doctrine that they are born with a nature wholly sinful. Had such been Christ's views of little children, would he have made them, *in any respect*, an *example* for his apostles? Or could he have said, "of such is the kingdom of heaven?"

The several facts to which I have alluded had much influence to excite further inquiries, and a hope of favorable results. I am, however, a fallible man; and it is not my wish that others should adopt my opinions, without careful examination, and a conviction of their truth. No declarations of mine, no statement of facts and circumstances which I can make, will afford proof to others that my present views are correct. I ask only a candid and impartial hearing.

Though nothing I can say can be of any proof of my infallibility in writing my present views, some things perhaps may be said, which, to candid minds, may be some proof that I have not been influenced by selfish considerations in adopting my present opinions or in preparing this work for publication. Were it not for a strong belief that the views I have given of man's liability to sin, are both true and

important, there surely are circumstances which would induce me to suppress what I have written.

I am now old, and on the verge of death. I must therefore be hardened in iniquity to write any thing at this period of my life, which, in my own view of it, would in the least endanger the welfare of my posterity, or any portion of the human race. Besides, I have probably as much regard for my own character, as any Christian can safely possess, and as great a reluctance to being the object of public clamor and reproach. Yet I am well aware that some of the views I have expressed, are repugnant to the opinions which have long been popular; and I am not sure that they will be found accordant with the creed of any one sect of Christians. Unless, therefore, they should commend themselves to the minds of good people by their obvious accordance with the amiable character which God has given of himself, I must expect that the tongues and the pens of many persons will be employed, not merely to correct my supposed errors, but to blacken my character as an apostate from the truth. This indeed is not a Christian mode of proceeding; but it has had the sanction of many scribes and pharisees, from the days of the Messiah's ministry to the present time.

These things and others on the same side I have aimed to weigh in an even balance, and to allow them their due weight. But the things which I found in the opposite scale, were too heavy to be overbalanced by any personal or private considerations. There I find that I am not my own, but the Lord's; that it is my duty to love and serve him

with all my understanding and all my strength; that he has kindly spared me to old age—continued my mental faculties so that I have been able to pursue important inquiries; that he has given me a heart to search out my own errors, and to acknowledge them when fully convinced; that I have been allowed more leisure for these inquiries than can commonly be found by ministers who have the care of parishes; that I have known by personal experience the embarrassment of mind which the popular views must occasion to men who allow themselves freely to reflect and inquire; I believe that God has aided me by his spirit in the present inquiry, and the result has afforded great relief and satisfaction to my own mind. On the whole I do not see how I could love God with all my understanding, or my neighbor as myself, should I suppress the fruits of my researches. For I verily believe that the views I have obtained are adapted to the glory of God, and the good of mankind. In such a case, what others may say or think of me, should be of small consideration.

What I have written may for a time be the means of exciting the displeasure of many; yet I have consolation in the hope that the time approaches, when multitudes of Christians will rejoice in the belief that man's liability to sin, results not from divine displeasure, but from divine benignity; and I have no reason to fear that worse things will ever be said of me than were said of my Savior, "who made himself of no reputation" in the esteem of unbelieving Jews, by teaching doctrines and precepts contrary to those which were then popular. If from regard to my own "reputation," I should

suppress what I verily believe is adapted to promote the object for which he laid down his life, I should surely fail of a due compliance with the apostle's exhortation, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

If from these preliminary remarks, any one should be led to suspect, that the object of the work is to exhibit mankind as really less guilty than they have been represented to be by the doctrine of total sinfulness by nature, he will be disappointed, or he will fail to understand the ideas which I have aimed to express. For it is my belief that scarcely any doctrine has had greater influence to bewilder the minds of mankind, by confounding things which are properly distinct, than the one which asserts that men are "*by nature wholly sinful.*" For in this case the phrase "*by nature*" is used to express what a person was by generation or birth, antecedent to any act of his own. I am well aware that mankind are capable of being so educated as to have a deep feeling on account of any real or supposed defect or deformity, whether bodily or mental, with which they were born, and which is supposed to have been caused by the sin of Adam, or the sin of their more immediate parents. But such defects or deformities are felt as *calamities*, not as *crimes*; and he that is in the habit of accounting for his own voluntary transgressions by ascribing them to a sinful nature, with which he was cursed for Adam's sin, is, in my opinion, in the habit of palliating in some degree his own guilt, whether he is aware of the fact or not.

CHAP. II.

Sources of man's liability to sin.

The following is the language of Jehovah to a people, who were disposed to cast the blame of their transgressions on him. "Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal; but as for them, their way is not equal." Ezek. xxxiii. 17.

From this language of God to the Israelites, it is very obvious that his thoughts were not as their thoughts, on the subject of man's liability to sin. This liability had existence before the apostacy of Adam, and has been common to his posterity in every age, and in all parts of the world. A condition so universal, and so deeply interesting to all, must probably have occasioned much perplexity to the minds of many good people, and been an occasion of murmuring to those who have been disposed to say, "The way of the Lord is not equal."

To vindicate the ways of God to men, is the object of the present inquiry. The purpose is important and delightful; but, in pursuing it, I shall need much of that wisdom which is from above. As men in all ages have come into existence by the agency and providence of God, his character, in one form or another, must have been involved and expressed in their moral condition, their constant liability to sin. This universal liability must, I think, be ascribed either to his benignity in bestowing favors, or to his displeasure.

In regard to the posterity of Adam, it has long been a common opinion among Christians, that liability to sin is the effect of God's displeasure, on account of Adam's transgression; that on this account all the offspring of Adam are brought into the world under God's "wrath and curse," and with a nature so corrupt and sinful, that they are "free only to do evil." If this hypothesis were correct, on whom would fall the greater reproach, or the greater share of blame — on *men*, or their *Maker*?

God's sovereignty, or his right to do what he will with his own, has often been urged in this case, to vindicate the supposed divine conduct,—and urged too, in a manner shocking to the feelings of benevolent and reflecting men. What would be thought of me at this day, should I attempt to account for man's liability to sin, on the following hypothesis: That when God breathed into Adam the breath of life, he communicated to him a nature wholly sinful; and then established a law of providence that this wicked nature should be transmitted by generation to all his posterity, as a constitutional property? Who would think that this hypothesis might be fairly vindicated on the principle, that God has a right to do what he will with his own? Would any one be able to see either justice or benevolence in looking at the character of God in such a mirror? But what better than this hypothesis is the one which has long been popular in Christendom?

God was the former of our bodies and the father of our spirits, as truly as he was the creator of Adam and Eve. As we came into the world, we were his workmanship, and not our own. What

then can be the difference, as to the equity of divine conduct towards us, whether Adam was first created with a sinful nature, and transmitted that nature to his offspring by divine decree,—or that he was at first free 'from sin, but on his transgression, God so expressed his displeasure as to curse all his posterity with a sinful nature from their birth? If the latter hypothesis can be vindicated, why not the former? If I was made a sinner prior to any act of my own, by deriving a sinful nature from Adam; what is the difference, as to me, or as to God's conduct towards me, whether Adam was originally created a sinner or not?

But what need is there of resorting to such a dreadful hypothesis, to account for the fact, that Adam's posterity have all been liable to sin, when it is a certain and admitted fact, that it was so with Adam before his apostacy? Had he not been liable to sin, he never would have transgressed. Hence it is clear, that the hypothesis of a derived sinful nature is not necessary to account for universal liability to sin. If we derived from Adam the same animal properties with which he was created, and which rendered him liable to sin, we of course must also be thus liable.

No considerate person will venture to deny, that all the animal and intellectual properties which God bestowed on the first parents of our race, were *favours*, and the fruits of divine wisdom and benignity. Yet these favours exposed them to temptation, and rendered them liable to sin. If then similar properties have been bestowed as favours on their posterity; what can be more legitimate than

the inferences, that DIVINE BENIGNITY — not *divine displeasure*, has been the source of man's liability to sin; and that it is only by abusing the favors of God, that we transgress his commands? This is the hypothesis which I shall attempt to illustrate.

In the formation of the human species, great favors are bestowed, by which they are exposed to temptation, sin and suffering.

What is more common than eyes to see, or the sense of seeing? And how numerous are the temptations to which we are exposed by having good eyes? Millions of human transgressions are occasioned by the sight of the eyes. John, in enumerating the occasions of being led astray, mentions "the lust of the flesh, and the *lust of the eyes*, and the pride of life." The violations of the seventh, eighth and tenth of the commandments, are commonly occasioned by the sight of the eyes, and the desires thus excited. Yet who will deny that good eyes are a great favor; that by the use of them we derive innumerable pleasures; that they are necessary to usefulness as well as comfort; and that to be born blind is a great calamity?

Many persons perhaps will here say, that were it not that we possess a sinful nature, we should be in no danger of being led astray by the sight of the eyes. I once so thought, and so reasoned. But reflection led me first to doubt the correctness of the opinion, and finally produced a conviction that it is untrue. I readily admit, that when men have formed *habits* of sin — which are a kind of second nature, these render them still more liable to be ensnared by the sight of the eyes. But if men were

perfectly free from both a sinful nature and a sinful habit, they would be liable to temptation by possessing good eyes. It is not supposed that Eve had either a sinful nature or sinful habit prior to her first transgression. "But when the woman *saw* that the tree was good for food, and that it was *pleasant to the eyes*, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat."

This account is worthy of notice, whether it be an allegory or not. If it be regarded as an allegory, it clearly suggests the idea, that innocent or good persons may be led astray by the "lust of the eyes"—or by such desires as may be excited by beholding with the eyes pleasing or alluring objects. The man of good eyes sees many desirable objects; some of these are not his, and are to him forbidden fruit. His integrity, therefore, is put to the test; and the temptation may be strong. In other cases it has doubtless happened, as with Eve—the lust of the eye so blinded the mind as to bring it into captivity. "So when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Perhaps we may say that there is no property of the nature we derived from Adam, our intellects excepted, which is more important than our eyes—and no one which has been more frequently the occasion of temptation and sin. But may we on the latter account call in question the goodness of God, in forming us with eyes to see? Or may we ascribe to our eyes a sinful nature?

Not only the sense of *seeing*, but *hearing*, *feeling*, *tasting* and *smelling*, are all properties of our nature, very important to us—conducive to both

comfort and usefulness; and yet each of them may have often been the occasion of temptation, sin and suffering. These ideas might be illustrated at great length, were it necessary. But who will say that any of these senses are of a sinful nature?

What has been said of the senses, may be said of the various appetites, passions and propensities of our animal nature. I say our *animal nature*, because these properties are as common to various tribes of animals as they are to the human race. They are in themselves good — are favors bestowed by our Creator; and yet all of them may prove occasions of temptation and sin. Had Eve possessed no *eyes*, and no *appetite* or *taste*, we probably should never have heard of her being tempted to eat the forbidden fruit.

Suppose it possible that a human being should be born and grow up without either of the five senses; would it be possible for him to be tempted to violate any command of the decalogue? I think not; and in proportion as men are destitute of these senses they are *incapacitated* for usefulness — *EXCLUDED* from the common enjoyments of life, and *freed* from liability to temptation.

Men are "tempted, when they are drawn away by their own lusts and enticed." These lusts or desires spring from the animal propensities of our nature. If then, it be a fact that in proportion as men are deficient in respect to the senses and other animal propensities, they are exempted from liability to temptation, is it not easy to account for liability to sin without the hypothesis of a sinful nature inflicted by divine displeasure? And is it not demon-

strable that our liability to temptation results from the kindness of God in bestowing favors on the individuals of our race?

Not only do the animal senses and appetites render men liable to temptation; but such is the fact in regard to their external figure, bodily strength, powers of speech, and mental faculties. Which of these has not often excited pride or envy, boastful exultations, or reproachful animadversions, discontent, murmuring against providence, and contentions among men? The tongue, that noble gift of God, has often exposed men to temptations;—and has been the occasion of some of the most horrible crimes and dreadful calamities which have ever been witnessed in our world.

It seems not to have been duly considered, if it has been understood, that there is no favor which God bestows on men in this life, which may not be abused, and expose men to temptation and sin. From God's kindness to the posterity of Adam in respect to their formation, I may proceed to remark, that the external favors of every class, which God bestows upon us, expose us to temptation and sin. This may be illustrated in a few particulars.

- Suppose that by a remarkable occurrence of providence a good man becomes possessed of a million of dollars. We should all say, that this man has been highly favored of God. He can now provide amply for his own family, relieve many who are suffering, and do much to advance benevolent objects. But this great favor has exposed the good man to temptations, sins and sufferings, to which he would not have been liable in less affluent cir-

cumstances; and unless he should be much on his guard, the kindness of God may be to him the occasion of ruin. He is exposed to become elated with pride, in view of his wealth; to set his heart upon it, and become forgetful of God and his own soul. He is also exposed to suffer by the envy of others—and by undue solicitude, lest he should lose his property. He may lose it, and become reduced to poverty; then how sad must be his disappointment and affliction.

Another good man may be blessed with an amiable wife, and a lovely family of children. These are inestimable blessings. But by these favors the man is exposed to temptations, trials and great sufferings. By these favors he is exposed to set his affections on the gifts, more than on the giver; to make them his idols, instead of loving them in the Lord, and regarding them as streams, to excite his gratitude to the Father of mercies. Besides, in proportion as his family are dear to him, he is exposed to great trials and severe affliction. He will naturally feel a solicitude lest his children should do something offensive to God, and reproachful to themselves—lest they should become ensnared by worldly allurements, their own lusts, or vicious companions. They are also liable to casualties, to sickness, pain, and death. This he daily feels with a tender concern; and by sympathy he shares in all the afflictions which any of his family endure, when known to him. Their distresses pierce his soul; and if any of them are called by death, how hard to part with objects so dear! They may all be removed from him by death, and

leave him a solitary mourner. How distressing such a bereavement! and what danger would there be of his being tempted to complain and say — “All these things are against me!” How evident it is, that such favors expose men to sin and to suffering!

BENEVOLUS has been blessed with a son of remarkable talents, and of a pious and amiable disposition. The father resolves to give this son the best advantages for a learned education, that he may be prepared for extensive usefulness. At a proper age the son is sent to an academy, and then to the best college in the country; and no expense is spared to render him a blessing to the world. This son is highly favored by the kindness of God, and the kindness of his father. But it is easy to see that the favors thus bestowed on the son, have exposed him to great temptations. The very steps which his father has adopted for his benefit, may prove his ruin, unless he shall be careful to resist the temptations, to which he has been exposed by the father's kindness. For they are temptations, at least many of them, to which he would not have been exposed, had it not been for the benevolent desire of his father, to make him a man of great learning and extensive usefulness. His distinguished talents and advantages may prove to him the occasion of pride, arrogance, vainglorying, forgetfulness of God and religion, and contempt for his inferiors. His new situation exposes him to vicious company, by which he is liable to be ensnared and undone. Should he fail to watch and pray, — should he yield to the temptation to which he may be ex-

posed by his father's kindness, what was intended for his good may prove the occasion of his ruin. The same might be said, had he, on entering his present career, been as pure as Adam was before his fall.

This last example shows how the favors which an earthly parent bestows on his children expose them to temptation. It is so in respect to the favors bestowed by God. Indeed the favors bestowed by earthly parents are also favors from the hand of God.

I may further ask, what is there of divine benefits to men in the present state, which has not been the occasion of temptation and liability to sin? The law came by Moses; but grace and truth by Jesus Christ." These, surely, are favors of a high order, and were designed not only for the temporal but the spiritual and everlasting good of mankind. Yet what man of reflection will deny that these revelations of the divine will and mercy, have exposed men to many temptations, and been the occasion of innumerable transgressions? The heavenly mission, miracles and ministry of the Messiah, proved to the Jews an occasion of temptation, and of sins of the deepest die. And does not the gospel, even to this day, expose multitudes of people to temptation and sin?

Let it be observed that these temptations are not limited to men who, like the unbelieving Jews, reject the Messiah as an impostor, and his gospel as a fable. By the same gospel believers, even good men, are exposed to temptation. For they do not and cannot think alike, as to the meaning of all the

passages of scripture—not even of all the words uttered by our Lord himself. Hence, one is tempted to suspect the uprightness of another, and to impute his supposed error to wickedness of heart; and the other may be tempted to retaliate the wrong, and render evil for evil. Hence comes contention, clamor, reviling, persecution and frequent hostilities between men of different sects. Now *this* series of evils might have been prevented, had God withheld from us the inestimable favor of that gospel which brings life and immortality to light. Shall we hence complain of God's conduct in sending his Son, and in causing us to possess the written revelations? If not, what occasion have we to suppose that our liability to sin is the effect of divine displeasure?

We came into existence as the work of God's hands, “fearfully and wonderfully made,” furnished with properties and faculties adapted to usefulness and comfort. From the moment of our birth we are the objects of God's protecting, sustaining, fatherly care and kindness. These we experience in every favor we receive, in every comfort we enjoy, and in every breath we draw. Beside the liberal provisions he makes for our bodies, he provides means for the developement and improvement of our minds—gives his precepts to direct us in the path of life, and his gospel to assure us of his readiness to pardon all our offences, and to make us heirs of immortal life, if we forsake the ways of sin, become the followers of his Son and walk as he walked. Now can it be reasonable in us, to suffer all this display of divine benignity towards us; to be

eclipsed by a belief, that with the noble faculties and properties of our nature God incorporated a constitutional and dominant property—a nature wholly sinful, and so brought us into the world under his “wrath and curse?” Who will dare knowingly to ascribe such inconsistency to our Heavenly Father?

CHAP. III.

The preceding hypothesis enforced.

From what has already been exhibited, it seems to me very clear, that God has dealt kindly with the descendants of Adam, notwithstanding his offence; that instead of bringing us into the world cursed with a nature wholly sinful, we were formed with just such properties as Adam possessed, and which exposed him to temptation; that these properties, far from being in their nature sinful, are like the other works of God—“very good;” that they were at first bestowed on Adam, and since on his posterity, not as marks of divine anger, but as expressions of the loving-kindness of the Lord; and designed to promote the comfort and usefulness of our race. So necessary are these properties to us in the present life, that to be without them would be a great calamity. Some individuals are born destitute of one or more of the properties which expose us to temptation;—others are, by

casualties or diseases, deprived of one or more of them after having possessed them for months or years; yet, in all such cases, the privation or loss is deemed a natural evil. It is, however, a truth, that these animal properties, though bestowed in love, rendered Adam liable to temptation and sin; and the same is true in regard to his posterity, in every age. But shall our eye be evil because our Maker is good? Shall we complain of our liability to sin, and excuse transgression, while this liability results not from God's displeasure towards us, but from his benignity?

Before we indulge ourselves any more in such complaints and excuses, let us seriously inquire which of the known properties of human nature, as we came into the world, could be spared without injury to our comfort or usefulness. If no such property can be discovered, let us be humble for our offences; and praise the Lord for those expressions of his goodness by which we were made human beings, moral agents, and liable to temptation. Let us be careful to render according to these benefits; and whether we eat or drink, do all to the glory of God.

After long inquiry and solemn reflection, I may say with truth, that I have discovered no satisfactory proof, that a single property of my nature was evil as I came from the forming hand of God. I have found no ground on which I might complain of the hand that formed me; but much cause for gratitude and praise. I have indeed found cause deeply to lament, that I have so often yielded to the temptations to which I have been exposed, not

by the displeasure of God, but by the exuberance of his goodness to me and to others. He might have rendered me less liable to temptation had he seen fit to deny me some of the common properties of human nature, and by forming me an idiot he might have rendered me incapable of sin. But in proportion as liability to temptation had been thus diminished, so must have been my capacity for enjoyment and usefulness. .

“Be not deceived ; evil communications corrupt good manners.” Such is the language of Paul; and with equal truth, he might have said, “Evil communications corrupt good” *minds*. The good or innocent mind of Eve is represented as having been corrupted by one who is denominated the serpent. The pure mind of Adam was soon after corrupted by the evil communications of his wife. If such were the facts relating to our first parents—if they were thus liable to be led astray; how certainly may the minds of children be easily corrupted by the evil communications of parents and others, whom they love, and in whom they place confidence! Children not only possess such animal properties as exposed our first parents to be tempted, but they are commonly, perhaps a hundred-fold, more exposed than were Adam and Eve to the corrupting influence of evil communications and evil examples. What possible need then can there be to resort to the shocking hypothesis of a nature wholly sinful, caused by divine displeasure? It surely is not necessary to account for all that is known of human depravity; and what mind that is not bewil-

dered by prejudice can refrain from shuddering at the thought of ascribing such conduct to God?

The theory which supposes that man's liability to sin results not from the displeasure but the goodness of God, seems to accord with the admonitory language of James — "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man; but every man is tempted when he is drawn away with his own lust and enticed." James i. 13, 14.

Could this apostle have supposed it less reproachful to God for a man to say when he is tempted — "My Maker brought me into the world under his 'wrath and curse' for Adam's sin, and with a nature wholly sinful," than to say "I am tempted of God?" If I ought to be careful not to say — "I am tempted of God," much more should I forbear to ascribe my own transgressions to a sinful nature inflicted on me by divine anger.

In view of the proposed theory let us look at the solemn appeals of God by his prophets to the consciences of the posterity of Jacob. "O house of Israel, is not my way equal? Are not your ways unequal?" Ezek. xviii. 25. "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge I pray you between me and my vineyard; what could have been done more for my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" Isa. v. 3, 4.

If our liability to sin results from the favors which God has bestowed on us, and our sinfulness consists in abuse of his kindness; there is great pertinency

and force in these appeals to conscience. But what pertinency or force could there be in them, if our liability to sin were the effect of God's displeasure?

Let it now be supposed that the two prophets who uttered these appeals in the name of the Lord, had been in the habit of teaching the Israelites that such was the Divine anger on account of Adam's sin, that all his posterity had been born with natures wholly sinful; would it not have been very just, as well as natural, for the people to have replied to the appeals in language like the following — " You have now come to us with solemn appeals to our consciences respecting the equity and kindness of our God towards us, and our ungrateful conduct towards him. But you will please to remember what you have so often told us about the curse of an evil nature with which we came into the world; and how impossible it is for a corrupt tree to bring forth good fruit. Is it then 'equal' for God to blame a tree for bringing forth fruit according to the nature which he gave it by an act of his displeasure? Are not the grapes which we have brought forth, of the nature of the vine as it came from his forming hand? How could God 'look' for any other than 'wild grapes' from such an evil nature as he gave us? Can it be reasonably expected of us, that we shall turn from our evil ways, while every faculty we possess is under the control of that evil nature with which we were cursed for Adam's sin? But the appeals which God has now made to us seem to imply a very different doctrine, and that our condition by nature was not such as you formerly represented it to be; that instead of being cursed with a wicked

nature for Adam's sin, God has dealt very kindly by us, and shown us such favors as render our disobedience without excuse. In the light of these appeals we can clearly perceive that sin is an evil and bitter thing, and black with ingratitude—and that we are indeed *sinners*. For where much is given much may justly be required; and by the abuse of great favors much guilt must be incurred." What could the prophets have answered to such a speech, had they been in the habit of teaching the popular doctrine of our day?

The views which men habitually entertain, in regard to the source of their liability to sin, must naturally have a powerful effect in estimating their own guilt. The more perfect and clear our views are of God's benevolence towards us, the more odious and inexcusable our sins must appear.

Suppose two sons have been for several years in the habit of disobedience to a kind father. At length they are both alarmed by a fear that they shall be disinherited. The older of them has been imbued with a firm belief that his disposition to profligacy was caused by an act of his father's displeasure while he was an infant—displeasure not for any thing he had done, but on account of the offence of another. The younger son is convinced that his liability to go astray was occasioned by his father's kindness and lenity towards him—the many favors which he had conferred; and that all his acts of disobedience were deeply stained with ingratitude, being an abuse of parental favors. Is it not certain that the first of these sons will excuse, in a great degree, his own transgressions, by casting the

blame on the supposed act of his father's anger? And will not the younger have a more deep and affecting sense of his own guilt, in proportion as he sees and feels that he is without excuse, in all his abuse of his father's loving kindness? To these questions every conscience must give an affirmative answer.

If then, we regard our liability to sin as the effect of God's displeasure, on account of Adam's offence, our sinfulness will of course be regarded as a kind of physical and hereditary calamity. But if we regard our liability to sin as having resulted from the favors of God to us,—and our sinfulness as consisting in a voluntary abuse of these favors; sin will then appear inexcusable ingratitude. Which hypothesis then has the greater tendency to excite love to God, and humble contrition for our offences? This question is fearlessly submitted to the conscience of every intelligent and impartial Christian.

As God has revealed himself to men not merely as a sovereign, but as a Father, more tender than any earthly parent, it may be useful to inquire whether the popular hypothesis does not impute to God a disposition which would be in a high degree odious in any parent on earth. Though it is a common thing, it surely should be deemed odious, for a father to lead his children into the paths of vice by his own example. But we may imagine something more horrible than this. Let it be imagined that a father has power to punish the first offence of his son, by causing all the posterity of that son to be born with a nature wholly inclined to evil: What must be the heart of a father, who could thus

avenge the transgression of a child? Can we conceive of any thing more repugnant to the feelings of benevolence? What good motive could influence to such an act? A good being must have a good motive for inflicting punishment, as well as in bestowing favors. To manifest a just abhorrence of transgression—to deter others from crime, and to reform the offender, may be motives for just punishment. But how can just abhorrence of sin be expressed, in causing the posterity of an offender to be born with a sinful nature? Who is to be deterred from sin by an act which renders a whole race of intelligent beings sinners, prior to any act of their own? And has a punishment, which so violates every principle of benevolence, any tendency to reform the transgressor? These questions need only to be proposed. The benevolent mind will answer them readily, without a prompter.

No other principle of divine government is more clearly revealed than this—that the requirements of God are according to the favors he confers on each individual. All he requires of each is a right improvement of favors received. “Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.” Where less is given the less is required; and where nothing is given, nothing is required. In whatever manner a person is deprived of talents or favors which he once possessed—whether by his own act, the act of a fellow creature, or the act of God, his obligations cease with the discontinuance of the favor. If by his own wickedness a man destroys for a time his reason, he is liable to be punished for that act of wickedness; but he is not required to

exercise reason during the time that the faculty is suspended. If by the misconduct of a parent a child is born an idiot, or is after its birth made an idiot, he is under no obligation to act as a rational being. To love God with all the understanding and all the strength, is all that is required of any one. The blind are not required to see, nor the deaf to hear; nor is the man who is destitute of hands required to do all that would have been his duty, had he not been subjected to this privation.

We may hence infer, that if it be a truth that on account of Adam's sin, his posterity are born with an evil or sinful nature, by which they are rendered incapable of *knowing* or *of doing* the will of God; they are of course excusable in proportion to the extent of the disability or privation. If in the way supposed in the popular theory, men have now but half the understanding or the ability to perform the will of God, which they would have possessed had it not been for Adam's offence; the remaining half is all they are required to improve — all that they *can* abuse, and all for which they are accountable. But if it be, as has been asserted, that God has so subjected our race to "his wrath and curse" that they suffer "the corruption of their whole nature, whereby they are utterly indisposed, disabled and made opposite to all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to evil and that continually,"* it seems to be a clear case, that they are as wholly excusable in respect to doing the will of God, as they could have been had they all been born idiots. For this is strictly a *constitutional* defect or "disa-

* Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly.

bility;" and such a "disability" is ever a constitutional excuse, so far as the "disability" extends, be it greater or less. If the "disability" be perfect or entire, the excuse is of the same extent.

I verily believe that this doctrine of "disability," resulting from Adam's sin, or God's displeasure, to be false; but whether true or false, he who believes it to be true, must naturally, if not necessarily, regard it as an excuse for his transgressions. He may indeed feel much affected with his wretched condition, and be deeply concerned about the consequences: but just so far as he accounts for that condition by the sin of Adam, or by God's displeasure, he will regard his case as *calamitous*, and not as *criminal*.

The language of God to the posterity of Jacob was not this—"O Israel, thou" wast destroyed by Adam's apostacy. Nor was it this. Thou wast destroyed by my displeasure on account of Adam's transgression. But this was his language. "O Israel, *thou hast destroyed thyself*; but in me is thy help." The same language he might address with propriety to every impenitent sinner, with no other change than that of the name. It is one thing for a person to feel and confess that he has been destroyed by the act of another person or being; but a very different thing to feel and confess that he has destroyed himself. The former he may feel and confess as a great *calamity*; the latter he may justly feel and confess as a *crime*.

There is perhaps no other dictate of reason or conscience more common to intelligent men of all countries than this,—that natural, hereditary or

constitutional defects or disabilities render men objects of pity, but not of blame. The biographer of the late Dr. Payson has two remarks which are directly in point. They are the following: "Nervous irritability and consequent depression was an ingredient in Dr. Payson's nature." This is one remark; the following has reference to the fact here asserted — "To censure a man for constitutional infirmity is as unjust and inhuman, as to censure him for bodily deformity, which he had no hand in producing." *Memoirs*, p. 428.

I admit the correctness of the sentiment here expressed; but it is perhaps applicable to an extent which the writer hardly suspected. For on the same principle that it would be "unjust and inhuman" to censure Dr. Payson for his "nervous irritability and consequent depression," it must be unjust and inhuman to censure mankind for any "ingredient" in their "nature"—any "infirmity," defect, or disability, which is to them "constitutional," or, "which they had no agency in producing." This seems to be a plain dictate of common sense. May we not then safely infer one or other of the following things? Either first—That Christians have been under a great mistake, in supposing that the posterity of Adam are born with a nature wholly sinful:—Or second—That this hereditary evil is a species of sinfulness, which it would be "unjust and inhuman" to "censure" in any of our race.

Besides, if the "nervous irritability and consequent depression" which was an "ingredient in Dr. Payson's nature," will excuse words or actions

which would otherwise have been censurable; is it not obvious that the supposition of a constitutional "sinful nature," will of course be regarded as some excuse for such words or actions as are supposed to proceed from that evil source? That it should be otherwise in the view of those who adopt the hypothesis, seems to me impossible; and in making this remark, I speak from experience, as well as from observation.

CHAP. IV.

Necessary cautions and illustrations.

In the last chapter, I approved the sentiment, that "to censure a man for constitutional infirmity is unjust and inhuman." "Nervous irritability and consequent depression" were the infirmities then under consideration. Some caution seems to be necessary in applying the sentiment. For "nervous irritability" is not an uncommon disease; nor is it confined to good men, nor to men of studious and sedentary habits. Vicious men are liable to the disease, and it may often occur as the effect of dissipation. The disease is not in itself sinful, whether constitutional or not. But when it is produced by vicious indulgences, we are not to excuse the *causes* of the disease, because the *effect* is not in itself sinful. Besides, there is in many healthy persons a constitutional irritability of temper. Though

this constitutional property, by which some men are much more liable to be irritated than others, is not in itself sinful,—yet it exposes men to temptation and sin, as frequently, perhaps, as any property of our animal nature. The more of it that any one possesses, the more occasion he has to watch and pray, lest he be overcome by temptation. In applying the sentiment of Dr. Payson's biographer, we should be careful not to impute to disease our own criminal neglects to obtain a due government of our appetites and passions: When disease renders self-government to us impossible, or so far as such is the fact, we may be excusable, but no farther.

Having suggested these cautions, I may now ask, what has ever been seen in little children, prior to moral agency, which has been so commonly regarded as a proof that they are all born with a nature wholly sinful, as the evidence which they give of possessing an irritable and resentful temper? Others may still ask, On what other principle can such a temper be accounted for?

There may be various causes assigned of irritability in little children, without resorting to the hypothesis of a derived sinful nature. Much of it may be ascribed to disease; and nothing perhaps is more sure to render persons irritable than hunger. Yet neither disease nor hunger is of a sinful nature. It will, however, be said, that children might possess an irritable passion, or they would not be liable to be excited by such causes; and what is the irritable passion but a sinful nature? I answer, it is strictly an animal passion, and as com-

mon to the young of other animals, as to little children of our race. If we may call it a sinful nature in the latter cases, why not in the former? Until children are endued with moral light, their appetites and passions have no relation to a moral law, and can be neither sinful nor holy. But when they become acquainted with moral right and wrong, they are required to subject their animal properties to the rule of right. However, even then, they are not required to extirpate any constitutional property with which they were endued by their Maker. To *govern* these properties, in suberviency to the will of God, is all that is required.

I may further ask, what known property of human nature is more commonly referred to by Christians, when they speak of the *remains* of their *unsubdued sinful nature*, than their irritable passions or tempers? Or what do they find in themselves that seems more to them like an hereditary evil nature, than what they experience of irritable feelings under trials and provocations? In the same figurative sense that James speaks of the tongue, we may apply his language to the irritable passion, and say — “It is a fire, a world of iniquity — an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.” I may say with truth, that I have never found or felt any thing else of my constitutional properties, which has seemed to me more like a constitutional evil nature than my irritable passion — nothing which has more frequently led me astray, or occasioned me more heartfelt grief and concern. Yet, when I seriously reflect on the fact, that it was God who formed my constitution — with such properties as render me

liable to irritation—my blame does not appear to me to consist in *possessing* such animal properties, any more than in possessing that “unruly evil” the tongue. In regard to both, my blame consists in not duly governing them, or in suffering them to violate the law of love. The existence of an irritable passion in the constitution which God gave me, is a proof to my mind that he deemed it important, that he meant it for good, and that it must be my own fault if I do not attain to higher degrees of virtue than I could have done without that animal property. Under what circumstances do virtuous affections shine to better advantage than when persons, whose tempers are naturally quick and irritable, evince such self-control, and such love to God and man, as to imitate the Savior on the cross, in suppressing resentful feelings under insults—in the display of a forgiving spirit towards enemies, and a disposition to overcome evil with good? With no attainments short of this should any Christian rest satisfied. “He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city, broken down and without walls.” But “He that ruleth his own spirit, is better than he that taketh a city.”

That the Messiah, while on earth, possessed those properties of human nature which render us liable to irritation, may be inferred from the fact, that “he was in all points tempted like as we are.” The additional clause, “*and yet without sin,*” is a proof of the opinion, that no constitutional property of our nature is in itself sinful. Had not the Messiah possessed such properties of human nature as expose us to temptation, he could not “in all

points" have been "tempted like as we are;" and had any of these properties been in themselves sinful, he could not have been "without sin."

CHAP. V.

The origin of Human Selfishness.

By selfishness I do not mean that proper love of self, which is implied in the precept, "thou shalt love thy neighbor *as thyself*;" but that base passion or affection by which a person regards himself as the chief object of esteem, and is led to violate the laws of God and the rights of others, in seeking objects for personal aggrandizement, or self-gratification. By the term selfishness I mean to embrace all that is known of what has been called a sinful nature in man. The question is, how or when does selfishness originate in the individuals of Adam's offspring? Is it an evil inflicted by divine displeasure on all from their birth, on account of Adam's transgression? Or is it a constitutional and hereditary evil, the *natural effect* of Adam's apostacy? Or is it an evil formed in moral agents by a voluntary abuse of divine favors?

Three hypotheses have now been suggested. The first is the more popular and prevalent. But as it ascribes to God a character too vindictive to be contemplated, and as I have already said much to expose it, I shall not enlarge upon it in this place.

The second hypothesis seems to me to be unauthorized by any passage of scripture, any dictate of philosophy, or any analogy known to men. Besides, if selfishness be a constitutional defect or deformity, I can see nothing in it of moral evil, any more than in idiocy, or any other defect which the subject had no hand in producing. If it be said that it is not in itself sinful, but only something which renders mankind liable to sin, the hypothesis appears perfectly unnecessary; for man's liability to sin may be clearly accounted for on other grounds.

In regard to the third hypothesis, I shall freely admit that our knowledge of human nature is so imperfect, that it may be difficult to give a satisfactory account of the manner in which selfishness originates, and acquires such fearful ascendancy as we too commonly witness. Yet I am not without hope that I may at least suggest such hints as may lead others to a more perfect elucidation of the subject.

Let it now be asked, when and how did selfishness originate in our first parents? It is not supposed that it was in them an hereditary evil, derived from ancestors; yet if it did occur in them, there must of course have been a time and some occasion of its occurrence. Whether the account of the fall in the book of Genesis be understood literally or allegorically, the principal instructions may be the same. I shall suggest some thoughts on the hypothesis of a literal construction. Let it then be supposed that prior to their offence, Adam and Eve had lived long enough to become habituated to pleasure in beholding the beauties of nature, and in eating

of the various fruits of the garden. What they had thus innocently experienced might predispose their minds to behold, not only with delight but strong desires, the fruit which hung before their eyes on the prohibited tree. Thus far they might proceed without sin, and free from selfishness. Then they might be "tempted like as we are" by being "drawn away by their own lust and enticed." Such indeed seems to have been the fact. For "when the woman *saw* that the tree was good for food, and *pleasant to the eyes*, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave to her husband, and he did eat."

To be tempted, implied no sin, nor sinful nature. But a voluntary compliance did imply selfishness; and thus it appears that selfishness originated in the first of our race. But who can suppose that this selfish act, or the qualities of it, became so incorporated with the original constitution of these sinners, as to be transmitted by generation? Such an hypothesis seems to me as unphilosophical as it would be to suppose, that had they, in reaching for the fruit, put out their eyes, all their posterity would have been born blind.

In respect to the posterity of Adam, it is to be observed, that they have all come into the world in an infant state, destitute of knowledge, or one idea of duty or sin. For some time subsequent to their birth, nothing is apparent in them but animal properties. At two months old they have less knowledge, skill and activity to help themselves, than chickens have the next day after leaving their eggshells. Until they acquire such knowledge as

constitutes them moral agents, they are no more accountable for their actions than kids or lambs of the same age. During this period, they become habituated to indulgence and self-gratification, in regard to their animal appetites, and too often they are pampered much to their injury. They see many things which gratify their appetites, and others which allure by their beauty. When, therefore, they arrive at some knowledge of right and wrong, they are of course exposed to temptation. For they learn that restraints are now to be laid on the appetites and passions, which till then had been freely indulged; that it will be wrong any more to take what belongs to others, without leave; and wicked to practise falsehood and deception to obtain what they wish, or to excuse what they have done amiss. Their appetites may still crave what is now to them forbidden fruit; and temptation is unavoidable. If while in this state their minds should be so impressed by the affectionate entreaties and admonitions of their parents, as shall occasion them to resolve to resist the temptation; their volitions so to do are virtuous and commendable. But if they resolve to violate conscience, their volitions to transgress are selfish and sinful. On the one hand, by a succession of obedient volitions, they may form a virtuous and benevolent habit and character. On the other, by a series of selfish volitions, they may form a vicious and selfish habit and character.

Prior to moral agency, children perhaps evince no other properties than such as are found in many of the inferior tribes of animals; nor any more sense of moral obligation, or of right and wrong. While

in this state, to ascribe to them a *selfish nature*, meaning by this a *sinful nature*, and thus account for their imprudent or disagreeable actions, appears to me a proceeding not only unauthorized by scripture or reason, but repugnant to both. What can be more unjust than to impute moral blame to a being that is not a moral agent?

Should an objector say, that children, prior to moral agency, evince a selfish disposition by seizing playthings, food, and plumbs which they see in the hands of others; I would ask, Do we not see the same disposition in pigs and chickens? And what evidence have we of blamable selfishness in one of the cases more than in the other? If we may apply the term selfishness in either case, why not in both? In both it may be *animal selfishness*, but not *moral*. For by the supposition there is no moral agency in either.

On reviewing the last paragraph, I found that, with little premeditation, I had used the phrase *animal selfishness*. The phrase is new to me; but it appears pertinent to characterize a disposition or propensity which is common to the young of various tribes of animals; and a phrase that suggests a distinction, which has perhaps been too little regarded, if understood; a distinction between *animal selfishness* and *moral selfishness*. It may be expressed in the following manner:—

Animal selfishness is that in the young of different tribes of animals which disposes each individual to appropriate to itself whatever it desires, without regard to the rights, the wants, or the feelings of others. Moral selfishness is that propensity in

moral agents which disposes them to act on the same animal or brutal principle, in opposition to the dictates of conscience, or in violation of the known laws of equity, love and mercy.

Until a child becomes a moral agent, his volitions have no moral character. For where there is no moral light, there can be no moral obligation; and where there is no moral obligation there can be no moral evil. But when by the light of moral truth, a child becomes a moral being; his actions have a moral character, to the extent of this moral illumination. The character of his actions becomes changed by the change of circumstances under which they occur. This principle is recognised by every reasonable law, and every reasonable being. Reasonable parents impute no moral blame to their children, so long as they are believed to be destitute of any knowledge of right and wrong. A maniac may kill his father, or his wife, or any other person, and yet be guiltless. However intelligent a person is expected to be in time to come, or has been in time past, he is not deemed accountable for what he does while destitute of the faculties necessary to moral agency.

To the extent that a child has attained moral light he is accountable. But when he first arrives at the stature of moral agency, he is but an *infant* in that state. Of course many of his actions will still be mere animal actions, not moral. He may know right from wrong in one case, while in fifty others he is not a moral agent. As his light increases, his duty increases; and he becomes more and more blamable, if he is in the habit of violating the dictates of conscience.

That a change of circumstances may occasion a change in the character of human actions, is very clear from the language of Christ relating to the unbelieving Jews—"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin." Had it not been for the divine prohibition, Adam and Eve might have eaten of the tree of knowledge without guilt. So until God in some way communicates to children moral light respecting their duty, their actions are destitute of any moral quality.

As each of the natural appetites and propensities disposes the animal in which it is found to seek self-gratification, the aggregate of this influence or tendency may, I think, be properly denominated *animal selfishness*. But God has distinguished the young of our race from other young animals by intellectual faculties, which are capable of such cultivation as to constitute them moral agents, and accountable beings. When they arrive at this state they are capable of receiving light, and of being influenced by moral precepts, moral truths, and by the examples of others. Our reason and moral faculties are given us to enable us to govern the animal part of our nature; to subject our appetites and passions to the law of love.

Our animal properties continue after we become moral agents; and it is true to a lamentable extent, that they are still suffered to reign in opposition to the dictates of conscience, and the requirements of God. Hence moral selfishness not only finds a place, but becomes habitual; and if the habit be not broken by some effectual call to repentance, it may

become like the Ethiopian's skin and the Leopard's spots.

It may also be observed, that when children are suffered to grow up to adult age without religious instruction, and in the unrestrained indulgence of their animal propensities and passions, if they are then awakened to repentance, their animal propensities still remain; and the more they have been indulged, the greater difficulty will naturally be found in subjecting them to the laws of temperance and equity.

What I have denominated *animal selfishness*, embraces all that the apostles mean by *fleshly lusts*. Paul in his epistles made a distinction between "the flesh" and "the mind" or "the outward man" and "the inward man." He could use the following language: "For I know that in me, that is in *my flesh*, dwelleth no good thing. For I delight in the law of God after the *inward man*; but I find another law in my members warring against the law of my *mind*, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members—so then with *my mind* I myself serve the law of God; but with *the flesh* the law of sin." Rom. vii. 18, 22, 23, 25. "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh." Gal. v. 17. He evidently regarded the flesh or the animal part of his nature as the source of temptation, sin and danger. On this account he said "I keep under *my body* and bring it into subjection, lest by any means after I have preached unto others, I myself should be a cast-away." 1 Cor. ix. 27.

Peter appears to have been of Paul's opinion.

Thus he addresses Christians — “Dearly beloved, I beseech you, abstain from *fleshly lusts* which war against the soul.” 1 Pet. ii. 11. On the same principle James accounts for our temptations. “Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.” James i. 14, 15.

That we derived from Adam such properties of animal nature as exposed him to temptation, I freely admit. From him we derived the animal appetites, propensities and passions, from which arise those desires, called *fleshly lusts*. But from the manner in which these are spoken of by Paul, I infer that they are not in themselves sinful; yet they expose us to temptation and sin, as we are assured they did the first human pair. They constitute the “outward man,” the “self” to be denied in obedience to the gospel. Had they been properly denied by our first parents, we should never have heard of their transgression; and had they been properly denied by us, we should never have transgressed. If Adam became a selfish being by indulging his animal propensities in a forbidden manner, so we may suppose it has been with all his posterity.

It is, however, true, that in a figurative sense our *fleshly propensities* are spoken of as evil or sinful, because they are the occasion of temptation and sin, and are commonly indulged in the practice of iniquity. But in the same figurative sense the most valuable and important members of the body are represented as evil or sinful. “The *tongue* is a *fire*, a world of iniquity, an *unruly evil*, full of deadly

poison." James, iii. 6, 8. "The poison of asps is under their *lips*. Their *mouths* are full of cursing and bitterness. Their *feet* are swift to shed blood." Rom. iii. 13, 14, 15. "Your *hands* are full of blood." Isa. i. 15. "Having *eyes* full of *adultery*, that cannot cease from sin." 2 Pet. ii. 14.

But who will deny that all these members of the body, to which such evils are ascribed, are in themselves innocent and useful, and favors for which we should be very thankful to God? To the same divine benignity we should ascribe all the constitutional properties of human nature, prior to their being perverted and corrupted by voluntary disobedience. On this hypothesis the wickedness of man appears indeed far more odious and inexcusable than on any other which was ever presented to my mind. Yet at the same time I have the pleasure of beholding the gloomy cloud of man's liability to sin irradiated by beams of divine benignity.

On the commonly admitted hypotheses that God is perfectly and unchangeably wise and good, and that our first parents were holy beings prior to their apostacy, it has been deemed difficult if not impossible to account for the origin of evil or the first sin of the first man. But if I have given a rational account of the origin of human selfishness, I have also accounted for the origin of moral evil in the human family. Nor am I without a hope that this has been done in a manner which implies no impeachment of the wisdom or the goodness of our Creator; and which shows that neither a sinful nature nor the displeasure of God are at all necessary to account for the first transgression of Adam, or the first sin of any of his posterity.

CHAP. VI.

The Moral Disease as explained by the Messiah.

Physicians may be agreed in the fact that a person is affected with a dangerous natural disease, and yet differ as to its precise nature, its origin or predisposing causes, and also in respect to the proper remedies. One may be of the opinion that the disease was hereditary; another that it was imported from a foreign clime; a third, that it had its origin in uncleanness or intemperance. A similar agreement and disagreement may exist among ministers of religion in regard to the moral disease which is so prevalent among mankind. The disagreement may have resulted from a want of due attention to what was said on the subject by the great Physician of souls. As he came to save us from our sins, it is reasonable to suppose that he did not fail to teach all that he deemed essential to be understood or believed by us, in reference to the *nature*, the *origin* and the proper *remedies* of our disease. If it radically consists in a derived *sinful nature*, inflicted by Divine displeasure on all the posterity of Adam, we may reasonably expect to find this view of the matter explicitly stated or clearly implied in some of the sermons, parables or conversations of our Savior. Especially so, if a belief in the doctrine be essential to saving faith, or that faith which worketh by love and purifies the heart. The same remarks may be applicable to every other hypothesis relating to the subject. Considering the character of Christ

as the faithful and true witness, and his avowed errand into the world, the expectation of finding somewhere in what is recorded of his teaching the views which are *essential* to the christian character and a correct faith, seems to me perfectly reasonable. What then did our Lord teach relating to the sinfulness of mankind?

In examining the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, I have found the name of *Adam* once only. Luke traced the genealogy of the Messiah from Joseph, his supposed father, back to "Adam, who was the son of God." This is the only instance in which Adam is named in either of the Four Gospels. In all that these four writers have recorded of what was spoken by Christ, in his sermons, parables or conversations, I have not been able to find the least allusion to the sin of Adam or its moral consequences; and, so far as I have discovered, he was equally silent in regard to an hereditary sinful nature transmitted by generation. It does not appear that he found any occasion to resort to such an hypothesis to account for human transgressions, or the ungrateful manner in which his messages were received by the unbelieving Jews. Several of his parables are supposed to have a direct reference to the manner in which the gospel message was treated during his own ministry; and in speaking on the subject he brings to view the nature of that depravity which occasioned his message to be so lightly esteemed.

In the parable of the great supper we are told that many were invited, who "with one consent began to make excuse." One had bought a piece

of ground, and he must go and see it. Another had purchased five yoke of oxen, and he must go to prove them. A third said, "I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come."

So in the parable of the marriage supper of the king's son, many guests were invited. "But they all made light of it; and one went to his farm and another to his merchandise." In the parable of the sower, as explained by the Messiah himself, the hearers of the gospel are divided into four classes:—The first class is represented by one who hears but does *not understand*, or does not *consider* or *regard* what he hears.—The second class is made up of those who at first hear with joy, and seem to promise fair; but having "no root in themselves," no real relish for the truth, or disposition to obey it, endure but for a time. For when peril or persecution comes, they relapse or fall away.—The third class is composed of those who, while hearing the word, have their minds so occupied with the cares of the world, the allurements of wealth, and the lust of other things, that the word is choked and rendered unfruitful. Or as Luke reports the explanation, "When they have heard, they go forth and are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection."—What could be more natural than these representations, as they apply to a great portion of those who hear the gospel at the present day? But there is another class of hearers.—The fourth class is made up of persons "who in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, *keep it*, and bring forth fruit with patience, some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundred fold."

“The seed is the word.” And by the sower, Christ himself was primarily intended. It appears that he was able to account for the fact that many heard his discourses in vain, without resorting to the hypothesis that they were born with a nature wholly sinful. It is said that Jesus “knew what was in man;” and it appears that he knew that there was in his hearers, or at least in the greater portion of them, much of real and voluntary wickedness; but I think it does not appear that he either knew or believed that all Adam’s offspring were born under the curse of such an evil nature as rendered them incapable of obedience, and free only to do evil. To some of his carping and persecuting hearers he indeed imputed direct hostility to himself, and to the truth; but he was very far from ascribing such a character to all his hearers, or even to all who failed of profiting by his ministry.

In the eighth chapter of John’s gospel we have a remarkable conversation, that occurred between the Messiah and some of the captious Jews, which was of such a nature as would lead us to expect that the doctrine of total sinfulness, as derived from Adam, must have been brought to view, had it been believed by either of the parties. For the subject of *natural descent* was distinctly mentioned, and that too in reference to the moral characters of the descendants. Christ had been speaking to the Jews of his mission from the Father, assuring them that after he should be lifted up they would know that he had done nothing of himself, but spake as he was taught of the Father. He closed his remarks with these words: “The Father hath not left me alone,

because I always do those things which please him." The following conversation will be quoted from the translation of Archbishop Newcome.

"As he spake these words many believed in him. Then Jesus said to those Jews which believed in him, if ye continue in my words then ye are truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. Some answered him, we are Abraham's offspring, and were never slaves to any man: how sayest thou, ye shall become free? Jesus answered them, verily, verily I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin, is the slave of sin; and the slave abideth not in the house forever, but the son abideth forever. If the son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.—I know that ye are Abraham's offspring; yet ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father; and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, if ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that have told you the truth, which I have heard of God. Abraham did not act thus. Ye do the works of your father. Then they say to him, we are not born of fornication; we have one father even God. Jesus said unto them, if God were your father, ye would love me. For I came forth from God, and come to you; for I came not of myself, but he sent me. Ye are of your father the devil; and the desires of your father ye are disposed to do. He was a slayer of men from the beginning, and continued not in the truth; for there is no truth in him." John viii 30—44.

If there ever was a time or an occasion for preaching the doctrine of a nature totally sinful, derived from Adam by ordinary generation, it would seem that such was the time when these Jews boasted of their natural descent from Abraham. How then can we account for the fact that Jesus was so perfectly silent on that point, in a case which seemed so loudly to call for the doctrine to be stated and enforced, if it be true? Besides, had the Jews believed this doctrine, would they have urged their descent from Abraham, when their moral characters were called in question?

It is worthy of remark, that Christ made a distinction between natural and moral descent. He freely admitted that the Jews were the natural offspring of Abraham; but in regard to their moral characters, he assured them that they were neither the children of God nor of Abraham, but the children of the devil.—If the moral qualities which constitute a sinful character may be so incorporated with the human constitution as to be transmitted by generation, why may not the moral qualities of a holy character be transmitted in the same manner? This is a question which I suspect has never yet been answered.

The evangelists record other cases in which the conduct and language of Christ seem to me irreconcilable with the doctrine that children are born with natures totally sinful. Such is the fact in regard to what he said of little children in the two cases referred to in my first chapter. In one of the instances, to reprove his apostles for their contention about which of them should be the greatest or

prime minister, he called a little child, and, placing it in the midst of them said, "Except ye be converted and become as *little children*, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." He also added — "Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Mat. xviii. 2, 3, 4.

If all "little children" derived from Adam a nature totally wicked, how could the Savior use such language respecting them?

On another occasion "there were brought to him little children that he should put his hands on them and pray," or "bless them." His disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come unto me; *for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*" Matt. xix. 13, 14. I am unacquainted with any interpretation, which can be rationally given to the words of Christ, that will not imply a decided contradiction to the doctrine of *total infant depravity*. Had it been necessary or desirable that parents should regard their "little children," or that little children should regard themselves, as of such a detestable character, when could there have been a more proper time to inculcate the doctrine, than when parents were presenting their children to Christ for his blessing? If the doctrine had been viewed by Christ as true and important, it would seem that there was not only an *opportunity*, but a *call* for him plainly to declare and enforce it, however painful the doctrine might have been to the affectionate mothers. Why then did Jesus forbear thus to do? Why did he suggest ideas respecting "little children" so perfectly opposed to the doc-

trine so prevalent in our day, as to imply that heaven itself is peopled with beings of the character of "little children?" And how could he do this without subjoining a syllable by way of caution, to prevent his words from being interpreted according to their natural import? Would the faithful and true witness have so done, had he supposed the Westminster views of derived sinfulness to be correct, and that a belief in them is essential to the character of a Christian? I think not; and if not, how are we to account for the fact that so great a part of the preaching, even among those who are called ministers of Protestant Reformation, has been, so very different from the preaching of the Messiah?

Suppose a person distinguished for his humility, meekness and his talents as a speaker, should make his appearance in Massachusetts as an itinerant preacher; that he forbears to attach himself to any one of the existing sects, but treats them all with kindness, and is willing to preach for any who are willing to hear him; that in his preaching he is practical, solemn, affectionate and impressive—employing his time principally in explaining to men the requirements and prohibitions of God, correcting prevailing errors in respect to duty and sin, reproofing men for their vices, calling on sinners to break off their sins by righteousness, and their iniquities by turning unto God—warning them of the fearful consequences of continuing impenitent, unfolding to their view the riches of divine love and forgiving mercy, as revealed in the gospel, assuring them of God's readiness to pardon all who shall forsake their sinful ways and become the humble followers of the

Lord Jesus. His example is so inoffensive and benevolent that it is a practical commentary of the gospel and his own preaching; and wherever he goes multitudes attend on his ministry. For the space of three years, he itinerates through the different parts of the state; sometimes he preaches in the capital and in other large towns, at others in the remote towns and villages. Ministers of the various denominations hear him with anxious desire to ascertain his theological opinions, and some of them with desire to catch something from his lips that they may accuse him. But during the whole of his ministry, he says not a word respecting Adam — his apostacy, or of a sinful nature derived by generation from him. The preacher accounts for the ungrateful conduct of sinners in rejecting or refusing the offers of the gospel, not by their possessing an hereditary sinful nature, but by their inordinate attachment to such objects and pursuits as tend to gratify their fleshly and sensual appetites and propensities. In conversing with wicked men, who seemed to trust in themselves that they were righteous on account of their being the offspring of a pious ancestor, the preacher said not a word of their descent from Adam, and of their having been ruined by his transgression, or by the displeasure of God on that account. He however assured them that as to their *moral characters* they were rather the children of the evil one, than of their pious ancestor. At other times he had occasion to speak of "little children," and in doing this he was so far from teaching that they should be regarded as totally sinful, and little images of the worst being in the

universe, he at one time represented them as examples worthy to be imitated even by ministers,—at another he expressly said “Of such is the kingdom of heaven,” and this too without subjoining a single word by way of caution.

Once more, suppose that this preacher, during his ministry in Massachusetts, was known to have a number of pupils, as students in divinity; and that when they became preachers, it was found that they were in their preaching as perfectly silent as their preceptor had been in regard to speaking of Adam, his fall, or a sinful nature derived by generation from him.

I would now seriously ask, what would be thought or said, at this day, of the theological opinions and sermons of such a preacher? Would it not be said by many, even of the clergy, that he was very deficient in regard to preaching the essential doctrines of the gospel? Would he not indeed be suspected, reproached and censured as a heretic? and by some, would he not be denounced as unworthy of the name of a christian teacher? Yet such a teacher was the Messiah; and so far as we are enabled to judge by the *sermons* which have come down to us, such preachers were his apostles. If there is the least allusion to the apostacy of Adam, or a sinful nature derived from him, in any sermon recorded in the Bible, I have been unsuccessful in my researches.

On the supposition that we all came into existence under the displeasure of God, with a nature wholly sinful, and that this doctrine is an essential article of faith, how are we to account for the fact

that this doctrine was *never* named or taught in any sermon either of Moses and the prophets, or of Christ and his apostles? Is it not a fact that all these inspired teachers have been a thousand times implicitly reproached by the denunciations which have been poured forth against such preachers, as omit to teach the supposed essential doctrine?

In all that is recorded of what was spoken by our Lord, I have found nothing which is more in favor of a derived sinful nature than the passages which have been quoted; unless the following be an exception:—"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness." Mark vii. 21, 22.

It will be observed that nothing is here said of any connexion with Adam, nor of any sinful nature derived from him. It is also observable that the vices here named are such as Paul has denominated the works of the flesh. Gal. v. 19—21. "Adultery, fornication, uncleanness," &c.

The heart, when spoken of as the source of good or evil, seems to be the moral *treasure* of the soul, comprehending all the affections, desires or lusts from which external actions proceed. Hence our Lord said, "The good man out of the *good treasure* of his heart, bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of the *evil treasure* bringeth forth evil things." Matt. xii. 35. That this treasure in evil men consists principally of fleshly desires or lusts is very evident from the vices which Christ mentioned in the passage first quoted, and from Paul's account

of the works of the flesh. Indeed I perceive nothing in what was said by Christ in the least opposed to the idea that the animal properties of our nature are what render us liable to temptation and sin. He names no vice which may not be traced to this source, a *forbidden indulgence* of our animal propensities. Some of these vices proceed in a direct form from this source. Others are adopted as *means* to obtain the forbidden gratifications. For example, it may truly be said, that adultery and fornication are forbidden pleasures, and are the direct forbidden works of the flesh. But what a variety of crimes do libidinous men commit as means for obtaining their objects! *Murder, theft, deceit*, and various other crimes are but means to such an end, or for concealing crimes of this nature.

Under the inordinate influence of animal desires men will not only commit the grossest crimes, but they will turn a deaf ear to the voice of truth and love. Under the same influence they will oppose and hate whatever obstructs their course. It is by the lawless indulgence of animal propensities that men become regardless of their souls, their God, and their future destiny. An "inordinate affection" or attachment to any prohibited object exposes men to cross the boundary which separates the regions of virtue from those of vice; and having stepped on the forbidden ground, they are exposed to be led on from one vice to another, till they become abandoned profligates, prepared for the worst of crimes. What crime can be named so bad that it may not have originated in an inordinate animal propensity or desire, and which may not have been

committed to remove obstacles which stood in the way, or to give vent to revengeful passions excited by opposition, or as more direct means for obtaining the object sought? I know not of any crime which may not have thus originated. In proportion to the ardor with which forbidden indulgences are pursued, men are liable to irritation, and to the feelings of hatred and revenge toward such as oppose their career. In the same proportion, too, they are exposed to become forgetful of God, or enemies to his law. There is therefore no occasion for the hypothesis of a derived sinful nature to account for any of these phenomena. Though our other animal properties were bestowed in kindness, and are in their nature as innocent as our *eyes*, yet when we indulge them, as Adam did, in violation of known requirements of God, we form within us a *sinful nature* far more inexcusable than an hereditary nature could possibly be. This may perhaps account for the fact that our Savior omitted to say a single word respecting the fall of Adam, or a sinful nature derived from him by generation.

CHAP. VII.

Paul's Account of Adam's Sin and its Consequences.

As Paul is the only one of the writers of the New Testament who mentioned the sin of Adam, I shall exhibit what he said on the subject, and endeavor

to ascertain his views. In the first Epistle to the Corinthians he had occasion to vindicate the doctrine of the resurrection; and in doing this he contrasted Adam and the Messiah — one as the person by whom came death; and the other as the person by whom came life. The following extracts contain what he said on this subject to the Corinthians.

“For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

“And as it is written, the first Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. The first man is of the earth earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22, 45, 47, 48, 49.

Nothing is said in these passages of the *moral* consequences of Adam’s sin, except as these may be implied in the representation that his posterity all died in him. I shall now quote what Paul said to the Romans, and the only passage in the Bible in which the *moral* effects of Adam’s sin are stated.

“Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. For until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not

as the offence so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one, many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned so is the gift; for the judgment was by one to condemnation; but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence, death reigned by one, much more they who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. v. 12 — 21.

In this passage it is clearly represented that both sin and death came by Adam, as righteousness and life came by Jesus Christ. As to the way or mode in which the children of Adam were brought into a sinful state by his transgression, the apostle explains no further than this is done by the following comparison or contrast: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

If then we can ascertain how the many are made righteous by the obedience of Christ, we may per-

haps better understand how the many have been made sinners by the disobedience of Adam. For "as" it was in the one case, "so" it is in the other. Shall we say, as many have said, that it is by the *imputation* of Christ's righteousness to believers that many are made righteous; and so it was by the *imputation* of Adam's sin that the many were made sinners? This was once the popular orthodoxy of our country; but who of the people of New England now believes in that view of the apostle's contrast? This view of the subject has been so generally discarded among the clergy of the New England states, that I deem it unnecessary to devote any labor to evince its incorrectness and pernicious tendency.

But the hypothesis of imputation was not the only idea or ground, on which it was imagined that the posterity of Adam became sinners by his transgression. It was also supposed, that all the posterity of Adam "sinned in him" and that by this one sin in which all became sinners, there was a "corruption of the whole nature" of man; so that the posterity of Adam are of course totally sinful, by ordinary generation. As all this was supposed, to be implied in the first part of Paul's contrast—"As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners"—how shall we explain the other part—"so by the obedience of one, many shall be made righteous?" Shall we say that the many "obeyed in Christ?" This was indeed often said by former writers; but this idea has been classed with that of imputation; and is, I believe, excluded from the creed of the New England clergy, excepting a few

individuals. I may further remark, that as none of our race have descended from the Messiah, by ordinary generation, and of course could not in that way derive from him a righteous nature, or become righteous, by descent; it seems to be necessary to find out some other way than that of "ordinary generation," to account for our becoming sinners by Adam's disobedience. For we should not forget, that, "as" it was in the one case, "so" it is said to be in the other.

I shall here quote Dr. Macknight's translation and paraphrase of the text under consideration.

Translation. "And as through the disobedience of one man, the many were constituted sinners; even so, through the obedience of one man the many shall be constituted righteous."

Paraphrase. "And as through the disobedience of one man all were made liable to sin and punishment; so, through the obedience of one man all have been, are, or shall be, made capable of righteousness and eternal life."

Others beside Dr. Macknight have supposed that being "made" or "constituted sinners," means no more than being brought into a state of peculiar liability to sin and death; and that being "made" or "constituted righteous" means being brought into a state peculiarly favorable to forming a righteous character, and obtaining eternal life. So the same apostle speaks of persons as having been "saved," who were favored with the gospel and the means of salvation, while probably many of them were still impenitent.

That the phrases "made sinners" and "made

righteous" are used in a figurative sense, may be evident from the fact, that in a literal sense they cannot be true. For it is impossible that any being should have been literally made a sinner, or "made righteous" prior to his existence; yet the language of Paul is as applicable to those who were born to-day, as to those who were living when he wrote. Such a meaning, therefore, of his language is necessary, as will apply to men of the present time, and all future ages.

The words of the apostle, in their connexion, seem to me designed to suggest, that Adam stood in such a relation to his posterity that, in consequence of his sin, they were exposed to sin and death; and that the Messiah came to redeem men from the evil consequences of Adam's disobedience.

I see no certain evidence that the posterity of Adam might not have been liable to sin, had he continued obedient; but it is very obvious that his evil example rendered his children peculiarly liable to go astray. It may also be observed, that there were many righteous men prior to the coming of the Messiah; yet it is very certain, that by the revelations he communicated, and by his obedience unto death, men have been placed in a situation far more favorable to becoming righteous, than they were prior to his mission. This surely has been the fact, so far as the light of the gospel has extended; and these advantages will be increased in proportion as the gospel shall become more clearly understood.

As righteousness consists in personal and volun-

tary obedience to a righteous law, and sin in voluntary disobedience, it seems reasonable to suppose, that it is by the *moral influence* of Christ's obedience, that many are made righteous. His obedience, however, is to be understood as including his preaching, his example, and all he did and suffered for us. And as it is by the moral influence of Christ's obedience that many are made righteous; so, I conceive, it was by the moral influence of Adam's disobedience that many were made sinners.

Persons who are *made to sin* are "made sinners," by whatever influence, or in whatever form, the effect may be produced. Though Paul is the only inspired writer who taught that many were "made sinners" by the disobedience of Adam; yet, in the Old Testament, we are told of many who were *made to sin* by the disobedience of other individuals. This is emphatically said of Jeroboam; and of several of his successors, we are told, that they "followed the ways of Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin." It was unquestionably by the moral influence of Jeroboam that he made Israel to sin, or caused others to transgress. Why then should it be deemed incredible, that it was by a moral influence that many were made sinners, by the disobedience of Adam?

Had the Israelites been the only people on earth in the days of Jeroboam, and had he, after obtaining his pernicious ascendancy, lived nine hundred years to exert such an influence; to what depths of vice and degradation might not that people have been sunk by one man's disobedience! Suppose

that at the end of such a long reign, the Israelites had been dispersed, to people the four quarters of the globe, and carrying with them the pernicious habits they had formed, under the influence of Jeroboam: might it not very naturally have been recorded that "by the disobedience of one, the many were made sinners?"

If in the Scriptural use of language, a Jeroboam could make a whole nation to sin, by the moral influence which he exerted over them, — and if a Napoleon, in our own age, and in a few years, could diffuse a deleterious influence throughout the civilized world; why should it be deemed unreasonable to suppose, that it was by its moral influence that the disobedience of Adam made his posterity sinners? Can we not much more philosophically account for the asserted fact by a moral influence, than by resorting to the strange hypothesis of propagating the *moral qualities* of a sinful act, by *natural* or *physical generation*? We can easily understand how children may be "made sinners" by the influence of the evil instructions and examples of their parents; — and how, in this way, vices may become hereditary in families or communities. So we can understand how children may be made righteous, or trained up in the way they should go, by such instructions, and such an example as were exhibited by Jesus Christ; — at least, we may understand *how* these effects are produced, as clearly as we understand how any effects are produced by natural or moral causes. As well as we know how good husbandry produces a plentiful harvest, and bad husbandry a scanty harvest; we know how

good instructions and examples render children virtuous, and bad instructions and examples render them vicious. Experience and observation show us that such effects are the result of such causes, and are ordinarily to be expected. But neither observation nor experience, Scripture nor philosophy have furnished me with any proof that the moral character of a parent can be transmitted by physical generation. What may be called the physical traits of a man's character is often seen in his children, as the effect of generation; but moral character is formed by a succession of moral acts; and this each moral agent forms for himself. Hence, every man must give account of himself unto God, and be rewarded according to his own deeds.

Paul, in writing to Timothy, used the following language — “When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee; which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice,— and I am persuaded that in thee also.” 2 Tim 1. 5. But who will say that Timothy derived his faith by ordinary generation? Had it, however, been *sin* instead of *faith* of which Paul thus spoke, as dwelling first in the grandmother, then in the mother, and then in the son, how constantly would this passage have been quoted as a proof of the popular doctrine!

In the New Testament, Abraham is represented as the father of believers, whether they be Jews or Gentiles. On the other hand, the devil is represented as the father of unbelieving and wicked men, perhaps as frequently as Adam is so represented. Such facts suggest a more scriptural mode of ac-

counting for the moral qualities which appear in men, than that of supposing them to be derived by generation.

CHAP. VIII.

On the phrase "by Nature."

Christians must be aware, that such language as the following, has long been common in our land; — "We are all *by nature* sinners" — "*by nature* wholly sinful" — "*by nature* totally depraved" — "*by nature* enemies to God" — "*by nature* children of wrath." Such language has been used to express the idea, that all the children of Adam come into existence with a constitutional sinful nature — a nature wholly opposed to God — just as they possess any of the properties of human nature. This seems to have been done with as much confidence as if it were certain that the phrase "*by nature*" has this, and no other meaning in the Scriptures. It will now be my aim to examine impartially, whether such a use of the phrase is authorized by the Scriptures.

The word "nature" is twelve times used in the Bible; and all these instances are found in the common version of the epistles of the New Testament. In the opinion of Mr. Cruden, the word has eight significations, in the few instances of its use by the apostles,

The phrase "by nature" is, I think, not used by any one of the sacred writers, except Paul. He used it six times. In one instance, he used it in reference to the objects of heathen worship—"which *by nature* are no Gods." Gal. iv. 8. In the other five instances, it is used in reference to men, either Jews or Gentiles. Of the five instances, one only has been supposed to teach that children are born with a sinful nature. This is found Eph. ii. 3. "And were *by nature* children of wrath, even as others." On this passage, Dr. Macknight has an important note, the substance of which, may be here quoted.

"*And were by nature children of wrath.* Nature often signifies one's birth and education. Gal. ii. 15. '*Jews by nature.*' Also means natural reason and conscience. Rom. ii. 14. 'The Gentiles who have not the law, do *by nature* the things contained in the law.' Also the general sense and practice of mankind. 1 Cor. xi. 14. 'Doth not even nature itself teach you.'—In the passage under consideration, nature is that second or corrupt nature, which men form in themselves by habitually indulging vicious inclinations. For the apostle speaks of men being '*by nature children of wrath*' as the *effect* of having their conversation in the lusts of the flesh."

My own views of the passage, are in accordance with those expressed by Dr. Macknight. It is however my opinion, that the phrase "by nature," as used by Paul, generally had respect to the external condition, under which men were born and educated, in regard to the benefits of revelation; and not to any supposed constitutional or hereditary

property or quality. The following remarks will be offered in support of this hypothesis.

By the covenant made with Abraham, the posterity of Jacob became God's "chosen people;" and, in respect to privileges, they were a "holy nation"—"a peculiar people"—greatly distinguished from the gentile world. But in Paul's opinion, their chief "advantage" consisted in this, "that unto them were committed the oracles of God." Compared with the Jews, the Gentiles were regarded as "aliens"—"enemies"—a people "afar off"—"who sat in darkness."—Instead of being like the Jews "a holy" or consecrated "people," they were considered as "unholy"—as "sinners." Hence, being born and educated as Jews or under the light of the Mosaic dispensation constituted men "*Jews by nature.*" Accordingly, in a reproof to Peter, Paul used the following language—"We who were *Jews by nature* and not sinners of the Gentiles." Gal. ii. 15.

Forest lands are said to be in a "*state of nature,*" not to denote their internal qualities, but their external condition, and to distinguish them from lands under cultivation. We speak of wild animals as in a "*state of nature,*" to distinguish them from animals which have been tamed and domesticated. Savages we denominate "sons of nature," or "nature's children," or "men in a state of nature," to distinguish them from men who have had the benefits of civilization. If I mistake not; it is in a sense analogous to this that the phrase "by nature" is used by Paul, when speaking of the Gentiles.

In the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Ro-

mans, he represents the rejected Jews as "branches broken off from the good olive;" and the converted gentiles as "cut out of the olive which is *wild by nature*, and grafted *contrary to nature* into the good olive tree." Such representations might have been founded on the difference between the Jews and the Gentiles as to the external condition or privileges,—and not on any difference of derived constitutional properties.

In the second chapter of the same epistle, Paul twice uses the phrase "by nature," as I conceive, to denote the external condition of the Gentiles, while destitute of the written law, or the revelations of God. In verses 14th and 15th he speaks of "Gentiles who have not the law" and yet "*do by nature* the things contained in the law—and show the work of the law written on their hearts." As external circumcision was a religious rite by which the Jews were distinguished from the Gentiles, Paul thus reasoned, in verses 26th and 27th. "Therefore, if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision which is *by nature*, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision transgress the law?"

By the passages which have been quoted, I understand, that while the Gentiles were far less favored than the Jews, as to their external light and privileges, they might nevertheless evince such light and love, as to prove themselves of an obedient temper; and that when they did so, their conduct judged or condemned that of the more privileged but disobedient Jews.

If any shall still assert that the phrase "by nature" as used in Eph. ii. 3. must mean that children are born with a nature wholly sinful, I shall wish to be informed how the same phrase is to be understood when we are told that the "Gentiles *do by nature* the things contained in the law." If the phrase "by nature" necessarily means the internal disposition with which a person is born, it will follow that those Gentiles who did "by nature the things contained in the law" were born with holy or obedient dispositions. It is not hard to conceive that different men may form very different dispositions and characters, while born and educated under the same or similar external advantages. But if the phrase "by nature" must mean the internal character or constitutional disposition with which persons are born,—and if *all* mankind are born with dispositions wholly sinful and opposed to God,—it is not very easy to conceive how any of the Gentiles should "by nature" do "the things contained in the law." If Paul made no mistake in either of his statements, others must have misunderstood his meaning.

As to external privileges, the language of the New Testament divides mankind into two classes, Jews and Gentiles. The Jews had long been a people greatly distinguished from the Gentiles by the benefits of revelation. Yet it is not to be supposed that all persons, of the posterity of Jacob had equal privileges, nor that all Gentiles were under equal disadvantages. Many of Gentile extraction probably were born and educated among the Jews, and might, in Paul's use of the phrase, be "Jews

by nature;" and some of the sons of Jacob might be born and educated among the heathen, and so denominated "sinners of the gentiles;"—or like some others, they might "by nature do the things contained in the law."

It cannot be doubted that, prior to the advent of the Messiah, the Jewish religion had been greatly corrupted by misinterpretations of the writings of Moses, and those traditions by which the Jews made "the word of God of no effect." The people, born and educated after these subverting traditions had become popular, were "by nature" subject to disadvantages. The nation had become divided into sects; and the children of these sects were educated in different opinions. Hence, some of them might be said to be "by nature" pharisees; others "by nature" sadducees. So the Gentiles might be subdivided and classed in a similar manner.

In view of the preceding remarks, it may perhaps be intelligibly and truly said, that the prevalence of the popular doctrine of total sinfulness "by nature"—meaning ordinary generation, has done much to render many persons sinners "by nature" and "children of wrath" in the apostle's sense of the phrase. For the doctrine that children are born with a nature wholly sinful is an influential circumstance in the external condition, under which vast multitudes have been educated; it has greatly affected the atmosphere of religious instruction.

Let it be seriously asked, what must naturally be the effect of teaching children that, on account of Adam's sin, God brings all his offspring into the

world with a nature so wholly sinful, that, until they shall be regenerated, all their actions are of the nature of rebellion against God; and that it is impossible for them to do any thing but sin, till they shall be born again. How long will it be, before these children will be able to infer that they are no more to blame for their *sinful nature* than the kitten is for her *disposition* to kill mice and birds? and that if all their actions are sinful, it can be of but little consequence to them, as to pleasing God whether they are careful to speak the truth, or indulge in deception and falsehood? As they are told that all people come into the world with such a wicked nature, must they not naturally regard sin as a species of common disease or calamity, for which no child can be really blamable; or a kind of common reproach which is shared alike by all, and therefore little regarded.

The doctrine that we are all born enemies to God, or with a nature wholly sinful, seems to affect the minds of people very much like the wholesale reproaches which are cast by the people of one nation or one party on those of another. As it is *common to a multitude*, most of the individuals feel little affected by it, and often throw back the reproach on the party whence it proceeded. How much more would a well educated child be affected on being properly reasoned with for being guilty of a single act of prevarication, of which he is conscious, than by being told that he and all his fellow creatures were born with a nature wholly sinful! To impute to children guilt of which they are not conscious, is a very sure way to injure them;

and to tell them that all children are born wholly inclined to do evil, as the effect of God's anger on account of Adam's first sin, is not only to furnish them with an excuse for their own transgressions, but to excite in their minds an idea of God as a most terrible, unamiable and vindictive being. If you go on and add to this account, that had it not been for the tender compassion of Christ, in consenting to bear for us the Father's "wrath," and the dreadful punishment due to our sins, God could have shown us no mercy, and we must all have been forever miserable,—you fix the attention of the children on Jesus Christ as the supreme object of love, and on God as the most terrible object of dread. While these impressions remain on their minds, it will be in vain for you to tell them, that it is owing to the wickedness of their hearts, their sinful nature, that they do not love the character you have given them of their Maker.

It has not been an uncommon thing in our country to regard the doctrine that Adam's posterity have been born with a nature wholly sinful, as a *test*,—and to reproach those who dissent from it, as enemies to God and the truth. But alas! how little has it been considered what a *nature* this very doctrine ascribes to God! Can any thing more shockingly vindictive and resentful be imagined, than that of causing infants to be born with a nature wholly sinful on account of Adam's sin? How far does the doctrine fall short of implying the dreadful idea that God himself is possessed of a nature wholly sinful? Far be it from me to insinuate that the advocates of the doctrine regard it

as at all reproachful to God. On the contrary, they imagine that due regard to his honor required such a manifestation of his displeasure. But if a similar disposition were ascribed to themselves, would they not regard it a reproach? I do not deem it a light thing to be regarded by my fellow men as an enemy to God and the truth. I would, however, much prefer being the accused to being the accuser; and I also prefer the risk of being reproached for dissenting from the doctrine in question, to the danger of being its advocate.

It seems to me that it behooves professed Christians to be careful, that they do not set up any doctrine as a test of Christian character, which was neither asserted nor implied in the instructions of the Savior of the world, — and especially a doctrine which represents the character and nature of God as the reverse of the apostolic declaration — “God is love.” Yet how often have good men been denounced as unworthy of the Christian name because they dissented from such a doctrine, — and that too while their dissent originated in love to God and a sacred regard for his word!

CHAP. IX.

On Genesis. xi. 5, 12, and Psalm xiv. 2, 3.

It may be objected that there are several passages of scripture, which many good men have understood

as strongly implying the hypothesis of total sinfulness by generation, to which I have paid no attention in the preceding chapters. I deem it unnecessary to examine all the passages which might be mentioned by an objector. The following are as strong and as much relied on as any in the Bible: If I can show that the import of these has been misapprehended, a clew will perhaps be given for a right understanding of others of similar import.

Gen. vi. 5 and 12. “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth; and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” “And God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.”

Psalm xiv. 2, 3. “The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside — they are together become filthy, there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”

The verses from Genesis describe the general depravity of the antediluvians, which God assigned as a reason for the flood. That their wickedness was great, is not to be doubted. But that the words are not to be understood literally, may appear from the following considerations.

1. “All flesh,” literally understood, would include all the animals then on the earth; for such is the meaning in some other places in the same book of Genesis. Yet all will agree that only the human race was meant by the “all flesh” that had “corrupted his way.”

2. That the words did not include *all* the human

race is evident from this fact, that Noah was found "upright," notwithstanding the general depravity; and such might be the fact with his family who were preserved with him, and perhaps with many other individuals.

3. It is very probable that infants were excepted; all who were in the condition of the "six score thousand" of the Ninevites, who knew not "their right hand from their left." For it is not easy to see how they could "corrupt *themselves*" or their "*way* upon the earth."

The words quoted from the 14th Psalm were probably uttered in reference to the people of Israel of that period; and it has been supposed that the Psalm was written on account of the civil war, occasioned by Absalom's attempt to usurp the throne. Whether this conjecture is well founded I know not. If we could certainly know the occasion of the Psalm, we could better judge of the meaning and the limits of the strong language which was adopted. We may, however, be very sure that it is not to be understood *literally* in regard to *all* the Israelites, and surely not in regard to the whole human race. Who can doubt that there were as many as *ten* of the people of Israel who did good at that period? Yet the passage says "they are *all* gone aside, there is *none* that doeth good, *no*, *not one*. The words literally taken would include David himself, the prophet of that period, and all the ministers of religion, and assert that they had "all gone aside, all together become filthy." And if the passage should be literally extended to the whole human race, it would imply that God had never seen a good man since the fall of Adam.

It will probably be said that the words were intended to represent what all mankind are by nature, and not what they all actually were at any particular period. But David says no such thing, and such an explanation is as real and gross a departure from the literal meaning of his words as any perhaps that was ever proposed. The passage is quoted by Paul in his epistle to the Romans, to prove that all, both Jews and Gentiles, are in such a sense under sin, as to need the gospel method of salvation. As they are quoted by Paul, Dr. Macknight has a note upon them, which may be here pertinently introduced:—

“There is none righteous, no, not one. These and the following affirmations must not be interpreted according to the strictness of modern speech. These strong expressions were used by the Psalmist according to the genius of eastern languages, in which universal propositions were used, not according to their strict logical meaning, but to denote a great number, as in this passage, where they are used to signify that the good among the Jews were very few in comparison with the wicked. The baptist saith of Jesus, ‘No one receiveth his testimony;’ that is, few received it in comparison with those who rejected it.”

A multitude of passages might be quoted to show that strong hyperbolical language was often used by the sacred writers. In describing great affliction the Psalmist said—“My bones are burned as an hearth.” Ps. cii. 3. To express a great resort of people to the ministry of John the baptist, it is said—“Then went out to him, Jerusalem and *all* Judea, and *all* the region round about Jordan.” That is, many people from all these places. A poet

or prophet had said, "the Cretans are always liars." Paul said, "this witness is true." True in the sense intended by the writer; for he probably meant no more than that *many* of the Cretans were much addicted to lying, or that lying was a vice which was very prevalent among that people. Before Paul wrote his epistle to Titus, containing his remarks on the people of Crete, a Christian church had been collected in that island, of which Titus was the bishop; and it is not to be supposed that these Christians were *all liars*, nor "*always liars*." They might however be greatly endangered by the prevalence of such a vice, and need the admonition of Paul. Nor is it to be supposed that the children of Crete were born in the very act of uttering falsehood. Yet we might as properly quote what Paul said of the Cretans, to prove that all mankind are born in the very act of lying, as to quote the passages from Genesis and the 14th Psalm to prove that mankind are all born with a nature wholly sinful.

Such hyperbolical language is supposed to have been much more common in the eastern nations, than ever it was in this country. But it is not uncommon in our land for respectable and even religious men to characterize a whole community as vicious, if such is the fact with many of the individuals. Of the people of one town it may be said, they are a very immoral and intemperate people — of another, that they are a very moral and temperate people, without meaning that in the first, they are all drunkards, or that there are no drunkards in the second.

It may be further remarked that the language quoted respecting the Cretans, said to be from Epimenides, was the language of *poetry*, in which greater latitude of expression is admitted than in prose. The same writer not only said "the Cretans are always liars," but added "*evil beasts, slow bellies.*" No one can rationally suppose that such language was to be literally interpreted, though Paul says "this witness is true." The same remark is applicable to what Paul quoted from the Psalms; it is poetical language, and as such should be interpreted. Nothing could be more extravagant nor untrue than many of the poetical descriptions of the Old Testament, if literally interpreted; but this we may presume was never the intention of the writers.

CHAP. X.

On Romans viii. 7, and James iv. 4.

There are two passages of scripture which have been understood as affirming that the minds of men as they come into the world are enmity against God; and that all men are by nature the enemies of God. They are the following:

Rom. viii. 7. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

James iv. 4. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is en-

mity with God? Whosoever, therefore, is the friend of the world is the enemy of God."

To all who are really the friends of God I should think it must be desirable, if possible, that a meaning should be discovered for these passages different from that which implies that our Maker brings his human offspring into existence with minds at enmity with himself. That the words are capable of a different interpretation I shall endeavor to show. The first of these passages is differently translated by Dr. Macknight and by Archbishop Newcome. Their translation I shall copy.

"Because the *minding of the flesh* is enmity against God."—The two authors agree in this translation; and this excludes the dreadful idea that the "mind" itself is "enmity against God." The mind itself is God's work; but "the *minding of the flesh*" is the work of man. As God requires supreme love to himself, whenever we consent to be governed by fleshly desires, and to set our hearts supremely on sensual gratifications, we act in direct opposition to the law of God; and such a "*minding of the flesh*" is what is denominated enmity or opposition to God. In the same sense too "the friendship of the world is enmity with God;" so that the man who seeks worldly objects as his supreme good, and prefers the creature to his Creator, acts as the enemy of God.

There are, however, in the Bible several passages in which to *hate*, *hatred* or *hating* is obviously to be understood in a comparative and not a positive sense. When God is represented as saying "Jacob have I loved but Esau have I *hated*," nothing more

perhaps is intended than his purpose to show to the posterity of Jacob peculiar favors, compared with the portion allotted for the posterity of Esau.

Jacob had two wives, and as he loved Rachel *more* than Leah, it is represented that "God saw that Leah was *hated*," which probably was not true in any other sense than this, she was less beloved than Rachel.

We have a remarkable passage from the lips of Christ himself, Luke xiv. 26. "If any man come to me, and *hate* not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

If the word "*hate*" were here to be understood in a positive sense and according to common acceptance, the passage would imply that no one can become a follower of Christ without being guilty of the most flagrant violations of the law of God, and even a murderer. For "he that *hateth his brother is a murderer*." The meaning of the passage is supposed to be expressed by Matthew, in the following form—"He that *loveth* father or mother *more* than me, is not worthy of me; and he that *loveth* son or daughter *more* than me is not worthy of me." Matt. x. 37.

The same law which requires us to love God supremely, requires us to love our neighbors as ourselves; and the "minding of the flesh" or "friendship of the world" is in the same sense enmity to our neighbor, that it is enmity to God. It is inconsistent with the love we owe to each, and may therefore be spoken of as enmity to both.

A boy may become so attached to sports as to

be unmindful of his father's precepts. His love of pleasure is enmity to the father, in the same sense that minding the flesh is enmity to God. The child, however, may not be conscious of direct hatred or enmity, although he may be conscious of disobedience. When this passion for pleasure becomes strong, the child becomes irritable and impatient of restraint. If frequently opposed in his pursuits, his hatred to his father's precepts may become, in the strict sense of the words, hatred to the father himself. It is not, however, by an instantaneous process that "the hearts of the sons of men" become so "fully set in them to do evil." There is a growth in vice as well as in virtue. Hence it is dangerous to enter on forbidden ground. He who adopts the path of disobedience knows not to what depths of depravity he may sink.

As a child, in the manner described, may become a real enemy to his father, so he may become an enemy to God, and a blasphemer of his holy name. I have not a doubt that many children who first entered the path of known disobedience to parents with great concern and trepidation, have gone on from step to step, hardening in vice, till they became literally enemies to their parents, and to their Maker. But to represent that such is the dreadful character of children as they come into the world, or as soon as they become moral agents, seems to me a contradiction to all that is known by experience or observation. Besides, to teach children that such was the fact with them, is to confound in their minds the ideas of sin and calamity. Children make but little advances in knowledge before they begin to under-

stand that *diseases* or *defects* with which people are born, are regarded as *calamities*. Of course when told that they came into the world with a wicked or sinful nature, they will regard this supposed evil as something for which they should be pitied rather than blamed; and indeed any evil which they did not bring on themselves is of the nature of calamity.

CHAP. XI.

Influence of the different Hypotheses.

Those who adhere to the views of human depravity which are given in the Catechism of the Westminster Assembly may probably object, that on the hypothesis I have advanced men must have far less affecting and humbling views of their own vileness, than on the hypothesis that all are by nature wholly sinful. Several things have already been observed in preceding pages relating to this point; but if more be needful, I would request attention to the following remarks.

As I was educated in the belief of the doctrine to which I now object, and had much experience of its influence on the mind, prior to a change in my views, I am perhaps in a better situation to judge of the comparative effects of different theories than those are who have had experience of the effects of but one of the hypotheses. What I shall now say will be partly from my own experience, and partly from observation and reflection.

If affecting views of a supposed calamitous state were the same as contrition for sin, I should at once concede the point supposed in the objection. But, in my opinion, alarming apprehensions of danger may exist in the mind without any thing of the nature of a contrite spirit. When a child, I often viewed myself as in a deplorable condition, in consequence of what was said to me of the dreadful effects of Adam's offence. But the sinful nature which it was said we all derive from him I could not but regard as a something, I knew not what, which came upon me or was formed in me without any fault of my own—and as a kind of impelling cause of actual transgressions, and therefore something which afforded some ground of excuse when I went astray. I do not mean that I felt no remorse nor contrition for personal offences; but I verily believe, that I felt much less than I should have done had I never been told that I became a sinner by nature, as an effect of God's displeasure on account of Adam's sin—and far less than I should have done had I then possessed the same views of man's liability to sin, which I have now attempted to illustrate.

The language of Paul is "I had not known sin but by the law." And this seems to me a much better way of coming at a proper knowledge of sin, than to infer it from a party creed, or to trace its pedigree back to Adam. But the divine law, as it comes to us, has nothing to say of Adam's offence, either to aggravate or palliate our personal transgression, or the amount of individual guilt. So far as we account for personal transgressions by an

hereditary sinful nature, we must regard them as partaking of the nature of calamity, and of course excusable. I appeal with confidence to the conscience of every intelligent Christian, and ask, can you distinguish between an hereditary, constitutional defect or evil nature, and a calamity? And with regard to such as still believe in that hypothesis I may ask, do you not naturally and habitually regard this supposed sinful nature as *some* excuse for your transgressions, or your failures in respect to doing *all* which the law of God requires?

There is perhaps nothing in regard to which the minds of men are more fertile than in the invention of excuses to palliate their offences, or their omissions of duty; and I know not any ground of excuse which would be more valid if true, than that which is furnished by the doctrine of an hereditary and constitutional sinful nature. Compare this with the hypothesis that our liability to sin results from divine benignity towards us, and that our sin consists in an abuse of his favors; then let conscience say on which hypothesis the transgressor must feel the more guilty and inexcusable.

Let it also be considered whether the latter hypothesis is not better adapted than the other to convince wicked parents of their guilt in neglecting to train up their children in the way they should go. Parents fully imbued with the Westminster doctrine, perhaps never so much as think of using means to save their children from *becoming totally sinful*. Indeed they might regard this as a species of fighting against God. For, according to their hypothesis it is the will of God that all children should be

totally sinful from their birth. They, therefore, regard them as thus sinful, at least in a mysterious sense, as soon as they are born, if not before. When their children become moral beings, the parents expect actual transgressions as a matter of course. When these appear, the parent will account for them on the ground of a derived sinful nature. The child perhaps goes on from step to step till he unquestionably manifests a vicious disposition, and some vicious habits. All is still ascribed to Adam, or to the evil nature which was caused by God's displeasure. Perhaps the thought has not occurred to the parents that *they* may have been the Adam and Eve by whom their children have been rendered vicious. Yet this may have been the fact in the view of God who judgeth righteously. That thousands of such cases have actually occurred, I have not a doubt; and many vicious children may have heard their parents account for their vices by the sin of Adam, and an evil nature derived from him, while in truth they should have been confessing their own guilt in neglecting to train up their children in the way they should go. Suppose in such a case the parents should have the truth relating to the subject suddenly break into their minds; how exceedingly different would their own guilt and that of their children appear to them from what it ever had done in time past.

Though the Israelites in the days of Ezekiel had this Proverb—"The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge," it does not appear that they ever thought, or even pretended to think that they were punished for Adam's

sin, or that they derived from him an evil nature. Their ancestors, of Jacob's posterity, were doubtless the "father's" referred to in their Proverb; and probably their reference extended back not more than three or four generations. But supposing that they had entertained what of later times have been called "orthodox" views, and had ascribed their calamitous condition to their connexion with Adam's fall—how forcible must have been the language of Jehovah to them—"O Israel thou hast destroyed *thyself*." To be guilty of suicide is a very different thing from suffering death by the act of a parent, or the act of God.

CHAP. XII.

Some facts accounted for.

It is not improbable that the views I have given of human depravity will be supposed by some persons to have been contradicted by the *experience* of a multitude of good people. On the supposition that the posterity of Adam did neither sin in him, nor derive from him by generation a sinful nature; how, it may be asked, can we account for the facts that many good men have been in the habit of confessing to God that they did sin in Adam, and that they did derive from him a corrupt and sinful nature? And how has it happened that good men, even on their death-beds, have been heard to lament "the sin of their nature?"

Before I proceed to account for such phenomena, I may be permitted to observe, that although it may be strictly true, that many good people have so done, yet it is a fact that I have not been able to find a single precept or example in the Bible which authorizes such confessions. In reference to public calamities brought on the Israelites or Jews, Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel did confess the sins of their fathers or the past generations as well as their own sins and the sins of the generation then living. This might be very proper, as the evils they deplored were brought on the nation as effects of the sins of the past generations, as well as of some that were still living. But it does not appear that any prophet or any good man, who is mentioned in the Bible, ever had a thought of confessing the sin of Adam, or that he derived from him a corrupt nature.

I now proceed to account for the conduct of good men of later times.

1. The good men referred to might doubtless be conscious that they had been sinners from childhood; but whether they became sinners by generation or by the influence of evil example and instruction, they surely could not judge from experience; and the opinion they had formed on the subject might be totally groundless. It might be a mere hereditary or traditional opinion.

2. Christians of every name generally pray in accordance with the creed of the sects to which they severally belong. Nor is it, I think, impossible for a man to imagine that he really feels guilty of having sinned in Adam. To illustrate this idea I shall state a case with which I was personally acquainted.

An amiable woman once applied to me to aid her in writing an account of the exercises of her mind, to be presented to a neighboring church, with a request to be admitted as a member. In conversing with one who thought she had recently become a penitent, I had the curiosity to know how she felt in regard to being guilty of sinning in Adam. On putting the question to her I perceived that she felt embarrassed. But after a little reflection she replied—“Formerly I did not feel guilty of sinning in Adam; but *now I think I do feel guilty on that account.*” She was not apprized of my views at that time on the subject. She doubtless had known that the feeling she then possessed was supposed by many to be necessary to a penitent mind, and she probably had meditated on the doctrine in that view of it, till she had persuaded herself that she really felt guilty of sinning in Adam.

In the town of my nativity it was the common practice for persons, on being proposed as candidates for the church, to exhibit a written relation of what they supposed themselves to have experienced. When very young I heard church members remark on the great sameness of such relations from different persons. After I entered on the work of the ministry, I thought I was able to account for that sameness, without at all questioning the sincerity of the persons who gave the relations. Observing people very soon learn the opinions which are entertained by their minister and others, as to what views and feelings are deemed good evidence of a converted state. When they come to be thoughtful about their own souls or their eternal

welfare they will naturally be on the inquiry to find in themselves such views and feelings as they have understood to be signs of a regenerate state, and will try to form in themselves those necessary signs. In this way I have no doubt that thousands have been led to think that they felt guilty of Adam's sin, and that they found spiritual comfort in contemplating doctrines which it was impossible for them to understand, or for any human being to know to be true.

In some parts of our country, and in some denominations of Christians more than in others, it has been common to pay great regard to the dreams of persons who have been anxiously concerned for themselves. Also to supposed visions, or voices of invisible agents, and to the sudden occurrence to their minds of some pertinent text of scripture. In societies of Christians where such things are deemed favorable signs of conversion, we may expect a frequent occurrence of one or another of these phenomena; especially so in a time of uncommon excitement.

Other things not very dissimilar may be named. Suppose a person who has been educated a rigid Calvinist should happen to be awakened from his slumbers by the preaching of an Arminian Methodist, or a Free-Will Baptist. This will excite in his mind an apprehension that he had been in error, and that the Arminian doctrine is the true gospel doctrine. Soon perhaps he renounces his former Calvinistic tenets, and becomes enamored with the opposite doctrines. This will perhaps go a great way with his new friends to satisfy them that he is

not only a convert to their doctrines, but also a truly humble Christian. In like manner, if a man, educated in Arminian views, is awakened by a Calvinistic preacher, the consequences are very much the same, as in the preceding case. Whatever an awakened person is made to believe is an evidence of saving conversion, he will endeavor to obtain, and perhaps often does obtain, without any real change of character. In each of the cases I have stated good effects may have resulted, but not one of the things enumerated are to be found among the signs of a good heart, as these are stated in the Bible. The humble, meek, peaceable and obedient temper is far more to be relied on than thousands of such signs as have been mentioned.

On such principles as I have named, many have doubtless imagined that they felt guilty of sinning in Adam, and of deriving from him a nature totally sinful. This persuasion may be strengthened by actually observing in themselves ungoverned appetites and passions—and habits of sin which they find it difficult fully to subdue and control. These may seem to the possessor as a sinful nature derived by generation, while in truth they are only the sad *effects* of having been long accustomed to do evil. Habit is not improperly called a “second nature.”

Before my brethren censure me for the hypothesis which I have advanced, on account of its imagined disagreement with the experience and confessions of many good men, I wish them to answer the following queries:—On the supposition that the doctrine of the Westminster Assembly is correct, and that a belief in it is either essential or important,

how are we to account for the fact, that every *sermon*, every *exhortation*, every *confession* and every *prayer*, recorded in the Bible, is perfectly silent respecting the fall of Adam, and also silent as to a sinful nature derived from him by generation? Why in particular is no such idea contained in any sermon or parable of our Lord? nor in the form of prayer given by him to his disciples?

CHAP. XIII.

Supposed fundamental doctrines.

Knowing as I do the importance which by many has long been attached to the doctrines of man's entire sinfulness by nature, and his redemption by vicarious punishment — I cannot doubt that some good people will be surprised, and either grieved or offended, on learning that I have spent several years while on the borders of the grave, in endeavors to convince my fellow Christians that these are not doctrines of the gospel: I may say truly that it is not to me a pleasant thing to be the instrument of causing either grief or offence to fellow Christians, by calling in question the truth of doctrines which they have been accustomed to regard as of vast importance; and while a sense of duty constrains me thus to do, I wish to do it in the spirit of kindness and charity, and to speak in love what I believe to be the truth.

I do not know how the opinion originated, but it seems to be one which has long prevailed, that the two doctrines which have been named are fundamental doctrines of the gospel, and a belief of them essential to correct views of the grace of God in human salvation. But nothing seems to me more clear, than that these doctrines exhibit the conduct of God as so vindictive that no earthly sovereign could attempt to imitate it without exposing himself to general reprobation and abhorrence. If it were in the power of a king to avenge the wrong of a nobleman, by causing his posterity to become of a rebellious disposition, the thought of his doing so would be abhorred by the benevolent mind. Perhaps there is no way in which displeasure could be expressed that would be more abhorred by good men. By what benevolent motive could a king be induced to such a dreadful act? And shall we ascribe to God a *disposition*, which if perceived in a human being, would render him the abhorrence of the world!

Vicarious punishment, or the inflicting of evil on the innocent, as a substitute for the guilty, has been supposed to be the method devised by infinite wisdom to redeem our guilty race from the state of sin and misery, into which they were brought by the offence of Adam. This is supposed to be another essential doctrine of the gospel. But what course could an earthly sovereign adopt at this day, for the restoration of rebels under his government, that would bring more reproach on himself, than that of inflicting on his own unoffending son the penalty due to transgressors, that such of them as should repent

might be pardoned? People of the present age have too much light to acquiesce in such a policy under any form of human government. It is only under the government of God that civilized men think of applauding vicarious punishment! Among men, the parent or the ruler, who should resort to such a method for pardoning the offences of guilty penitents, would be deemed a *barbarian*. Can it then be wonderful if reflecting men are led to inquire whether the doctrine in question did not originate in a barbarous age, and a barbarous state of society?

If we candidly review the history of past ages, we shall doubtless find reason to believe that the policy of inflicting evil on a son for the sin of his father, and the policy also of vicarious punishment, were once viewed in a very different light from what they are now in countries which have become enlightened by philosophy and religion.

I have no doubt that many very good people have thought these doctrines to be true and in a high degree adapted to give glory to God. With such a view of them, they have been denominated “doctrines of grace.” But let them become the subjects of impartial examination—let it be seriously considered how such conduct would appear in an earthly sovereign, as these doctrines ascribe to God—then let conscience say whether the doctrines do not at least *seem* to be *doctrines of wrath*? Do they not ascribe to God a disposition and character the reverse of what he requires of every Christian as a condition of salvation? And where is the good man who would not shudder at the thought of being transformed into such a character as these doctrines

impute to our heavenly Father? And what Christian should not shudder at the thought of attributing to God a character which he would deem reproachful if ascribed to himself?

It has too long been the practice of partisans of different sects to make the peculiarities of their own creed a *test* of Christian character; and to regard a disbelief of such doctrines as evidence of an unconverted state—of hatred to the true character of God. It has been so to a great extent in regard to the doctrines now under consideration. But if such acts or similar acts were imputed to a prince or parent, eminent for his benignity, would not true friendship to his character excite a doubt of the correctness of the report which affirmed them? Before we ascribe it to hatred of God's true character, that others question the truth of our peculiar doctrines, it behooves us very carefully to inquire, whether our doctrines do not ascribe to God a disposition the reverse of *love*—the reverse of the amiable disposition ascribed to him by his beloved son. At a future day it may be deemed a strange proceeding for fallible mortals to exhibit their Maker in *moral habiliments* which would be a reproach to any good man, and then impute it to hatred of God's true character that others do not delight in these characteristics.

I regard the Messiah as "the image of the invisible God" in his *moral character*, or the benevolent and forgiving disposition which was exhibited in his own example, and required by his precepts. But where shall we find a more perfect contrast than is presented by comparing the *disposition* of the Mes-

siah with the *disposition* ascribed to God by the two doctrines which have been considered? The Father is represented of such a *disposition* that he could avenge the sin of Adam by causing all his posterity to be born with a nature wholly sinful: But the son was of such a *disposition*, that while he hung in agonies on the cross, he could pray for the forgiveness of his murderers! Does the universe furnish a greater contrast? And can the disposition of the son be the "image" of that ascribed to the Father?

CHAP. XIV.

Some advantages of the proposed hypothesis.

Having endeavored to show that man's liability to sin is not the effect of God's displeasure, but of his benignity, I shall now mention some of the advantages which may result from the adoption of this hypothesis.

1. Judging from my own experience, I think it must afford great relief to men, who were educated as I was, to be able to account for a fact so universal as man's liability to sin on other grounds than that of divine displeasure, or that of being born with a nature wholly sinful. I deem it impossible for any man to believe that he was born with such a nature, without regarding it as some excuse for his actual transgressions; and equally impossible for him to perceive either justice, wisdom or benevolence in such a supposed display of God's anger.

The moment we admit a constitutional evil nature, as the source of our liability to sin, we are ashore and in the dark, as to discovering any good motive for the conduct which we thus ascribe to our Maker. We see nothing in this part of his conduct, which so much as seems to be meant for our good, or the benefit of other beings. But on the proposed hypothesis we may behold the wisdom and kindness of God in forming us with those animal properties which are adapted to our comfort and usefulness, although experience shows us that these properties render us very liable to temptation and sin. We have no occasion to ascribe it to divine displeasure that we possess such properties; for we can clearly perceive that they were meant for our good; and that it is only by abusing them, or indulging them in pursuit of forbidden pleasures, that they become evils to us—just as the portion of goods bestowed on the prodigal son, became evils to him by his wasting them in riotous living. Can it be otherwise than comforting to the Christian to be able thus to account for a fact which has existed in every age and in every part of the world, and which has occasioned much pain and anxiety to the minds of good men?

2. The proposed hypothesis is adapted to strip the transgressor of his most common excuses, and to open the way for direct appeals to his conscience and his heart. When he shall clearly understand this view of the subject, he will no longer be able to plead that he came into existence with an evil nature, and was made a sinner without his own consent. He may be made to see and to feel that

the properties which expose him to temptation, are just such as exposed Adam; that they are favors of God, of high importance to our comfort and usefulness, and such as demand the most grateful returns.

3. This hypothesis opens a field of delightful prospects in regard to what may be effected by religious education. It exhibits the minds of little children as important tracts of *new-made* land, designed for cultivation—in which wheat or tares, or both together, may be sown with expectation that the harvest will accord with the quality of the seed, the manner of sowing, and the care bestowed in cultivating and fencing these little gardens of the Lord, which are commonly committed to the superintendence of parents. Among the good seeds to be sown in their minds, as soon as they are capable of receiving them, are those truths which relate to their liability to sin, in abusing the favors which God bestowed on them in their formation, and other favors with which they are daily surrounded. The favors of God are innumerable; and with what ideas of a religious character can the minds of children be more usefully stored, than with such as may tend to impress them with a sense of the goodness of God to them and to all his creatures. But if children were formed with a nature wholly sinful, the best of seed might be sown in their minds with as little probability of success, as there would be in sowing wheat in a hot furnace.

4. *Greater consistency* between profession and practice, than now exists, may be another advantage of the proposed hypothesis. If I am not under a mistake there has long been a very great inconsis-

tency between the creed and the conduct of those who have professed to believe the doctrines of total sinfulness by nature. Without the wish to reproach, I shall attempt fairly to illustrate the inconsistency, by stating a case which may be of extensive application.

My brother Lacon is both a clergyman and a parent. By education his mind became deeply imbued with the doctrine of the Westminster Assembly. In his preaching he urges the following ideas; that all the posterity of Adam sinned in him and fell with him; that they come into the world with a nature wholly sinful; that all their voluntary actions proceed from a corrupt fountain, until they are regenerated; that "every sin deserves God's wrath and curse both in this life and that which is to come." He has six amiable children under fifteen years of age. In his view they are yet in an unconverted state; but he says they are obedient to their parents, affectionate to one another, and kind to their neighbors. In catechising them, he endeavors to impress the ideas of their ruined state, their evil nature, and the certainty that all their actions must be hateful in the sight of God so long as they shall remain in their present unconverted state.

Now what is to be expected of Mr. Lacon, in his conduct towards these children? Can he take a moment's rest while he believes that his six children are constantly employed in such acts as deserve God's endless displeasure? Can he view them with a smiling countenance or an approving look? May we not feel assured that his children will daily behold in his countenance evidence of deep concern

for them, and strong disapprobation of all their words and actions?

Mr. Lacon has also in his parish a number of men and women who are remarkably kind, respectful and liberal in their conduct towards him and his family. Every month he receives from one or another of them valuable presents; and if at any time he is in affliction, they are among the first to fly to his assistance. Yet these benefactors are regarded by him as in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. All their kind actions are supposed by him to proceed from that selfishness which is enmity against God. How then must they be treated by their minister? Can he possibly appear pleased at what he believes is so wicked, so offensive to God, and which so endangers their eternal welfare?

But notwithstanding his creed, brother Lacon is an amiable man, a kind father, and an affectionate pastor. His common sense and benevolent feelings often get the better of his creed. He beholds with delight the evidences of love in his children to their parents and to one another; and he receives with signs of heartfelt gratitude the liberal donations of his supposed unconverted benefactors. In regard to the amiable conduct of his children, he often tells them that they have *done well*; and he calls them *good children*. He not only thanks his benefactors, already mentioned, but expresses to them a hope that God will *reward* them for their beneficence to him.

Now what can be more inconsistent than the creed and the conduct of this good minister. According

to his creed and his preaching, his children and his benefactors are all *images* of the *evil one*—in heart as bad as total depravity itself. But, at other times, both by words and deeds, he speaks highly of these very persons, and their actions are applauded, though according to his creed, there is not one of their deeds which does not deserve God's wrath and curse in time and to eternity.

Brother Lacon is not alone in such inconsistency. I believe it is very common, not only with ministers, but with private Christians, who profess the same faith. I am free to confess that reflection on my own past conduct has had much influence in leading me to a thorough examination of the subject. I am now unable to see how any Christian can act consistently with such a creed. Christian feelings will daily get the better of such a belief, and lead to a practical denial of the doctrine. I think it cannot be reduced to practice without producing very unhappy results, in families and societies.

To illustrate the idea last suggested, we will suppose that brother Lacon has now become convinced of his inconsistency, and instead of changing his creed, he has resolved to make his practice square with it at all hazards. He begins at home, and changes his conduct towards his children, who are still supposed by him to be in an unconverted state. He ceases to approve, even by a smile, their most lovely actions of filial obedience and brotherly affection, lest he should encourage them in rebellion against God. The children are at first surprised and grieved, then offended and alienated. For they find that it is impossible for them to please their

father. Their mother is a lovely, Christian woman. On observing the change in her husband's conduct, and learning the cause, she examines the subject, and becomes convinced that the creed is not correct. This she makes known to him. He, of course, infers that she is unconverted. He therefore ceases to approve her kind attentions to himself, and her assiduous care for her offspring. Strong marks of sorrow and disapprobation are the prominent traits of his countenance. His benefactors, still unconverted, are no longer received with grateful smiles, when they come with their free-will offerings.

The change in Mr. Lacon's conduct is blazoned through the parish. Two deacons soon come to inquire for the cause. Mr. L. frankly confesses his conviction that his past conduct had been very inconsistent with his preaching. In reply to their inquiries he thus observes:—"You know that our articles of faith very clearly imply that all men are by nature wholly sinful, and that while unconverted their actions all proceed from that corrupt nature; and must of course be offensive to God. My preaching has accorded with this creed; and you know that I have again and again warned church members of the danger of approving any customs, words or actions, which they believed to be sinful. Yet what have I done? I have often countenanced and approved the actions and words of many persons, while I regarded them as in a state of nature. I have done so abundantly in my own family; I have done so in regard to many of the children of the parish, and I have done so with regard to men and women who have been benefactors to me and my

family. When they have given liberally to the poor and afflicted, or for the promotion of benevolent objects of a public nature, I have not hesitated to express my approbation, and my hope that God would graciously reward them for what they had done. But I have seen my inconsistency; I have resolved to reform; and I hope for your aid to promote a reformation in all the members of the church."

After hearing much of this nature, one of the deacons professed to be prepared to go all lengths with the minister in his proposed reformation. The other deacon hesitated; but after a little reflection he utters the following sentiments:— "I gave my assent to our articles of faith in the belief that they had been formed by wiser and better men than myself; and I supposed that they must be true in one sense or another, though I could not very clearly see how they could be so. I certainly never had a thought of reducing them to practice in the logical form proposed by Mr. Lacon. I cannot do it in my own family, nor among my neighbors. My wife has not joined the church, because she fears that she has not experienced such a change as others have professed. Yet you are aware that she is very kind to me and to her children, and very circumspect in her conduct. My children are images of their mother. Shall I change my conduct towards these objects of my tender affection? Shall I put on a countenance of disapprobation when I see in them expressions of love to me and to one another? No, verily! Sooner will I consent to lay aside our party creed, and take the Bible as my rule of my faith and practice. Those of our parish

who are not professors of religion, have indeed often heard Mr. Lacon teach, that all their actions are sinful while they remain unregenerate; but as their consciences did not accuse them, when they thought they did right, and as he often applauded many of their deeds, they supposed it could be only in some technical or mysterious sense that he considered all their actions to be sinful. Besides, they were doubtless conscious that *many* of their actions were wicked; they therefore made little complaint of his preaching, though it implied that they as really sinned when they spoke the truth as when they lied—when they did deeds of kindness, as when they oppressed their fellow men—when they were temperate, as when they were intoxicated. But should he in future change his conduct towards them, go on with his proposed reformation, and urge the church to follow his example, it is my opinion that he will injure his own family, throw the parish into a state of confusion, and ‘*reform*’ himself out of employment in this town.”

What the result will be in brother Lacon’s parish, the reader must judge for himself. By adopting the proposed hypothesis, such inconsistencies as have now been illustrated may be avoided. The divine law, and not a party creed, will then be the standard by which human actions will be estimated.

Of what real use can a doctrine be which is daily contradicted by the practice of those who profess to regard it as an essential article of faith? As actions speak as loud as words, one of two things may be inferred from facts; either that a belief in the doctrine of total sinfulness by nature, is not essential

to the character of a Christian, or that there has never yet been a practical and consistent Christian in New-England. If any of my brethren should be disposed to censure me for my dissent from the doctrine, let him review the book of his own daily practice, and he will probably find that it contains as clear and as loud declarations of dissent as can be found in any thing which I have written. If he will resolve to delay censuring others, till he shall have reduced his own practice to a consistency with his creed, no one will in future have any reason to fear being reproached by him.

PART II.

SUPPLEMENTAL ILLUSTRATIONS.

NO. I.

Remarkable Individuals.

Adam was not the only man by whose disobedience many were made sinners; nor was the Messiah the only person by whose obedience many were made righteous. Though sin and death entered the world by the apostacy of our first parents, yet other individuals may have been much more guilty than they were, and have done more to corrupt and destroy our race. The murder of Abel might be a consequence of Adam's sin, yet Cain might be a greater sinner than Adam. He was the first homicide or warrior, and to his influence may perhaps be traced the innumerable instances of manslaughter which occurred before the flood. But Cain himself might be far less criminal than many of his warring followers, who have been praised for the magnitude and multiplicity of their mischiefs. In one of the preceding chapters, mention was made of Jeroboam as one who caused many to sin; and every age perhaps has produced its Jeroboams.

As others beside Adam have by their disobedience made many sinners, so others beside the Messiah have by their obedience made many to become righteous. But in this respect the Messiah, above all others, has the pre-eminence. He was truly "the captain of our salvation." Some others, however, may be mentioned, who contributed much to the righteousness and salvation of their fellow men.

According to the scriptures, all the present inhabitants of the earth are as really the children of Noah, as they are of Adam. He among the degenerate antediluvians was found "upright;" and on this account he was selected to be preserved with his family from the ravages of the flood. Noah acted for his posterity, as well as Adam by his disobedience exposed his posterity to sin and death. Noah by his obedience, faith and righteousness was the instrument of preserving his immediate posterity from death by the deluge, and of giving life to all who have since been born. Besides, his obedience or righteousness may be said to have been a cause of all the righteousness and salvation which have occurred since the flood. He was indeed, "the salt of the earth," and perhaps the most eminent type of the Messiah, whose name is on record.

Abraham was another individual by whose faith and obedience many have been made righteous. By these he obtained the promise that in him and his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Abraham, too, acted not merely for himself, but for his posterity, and for the world of mankind. The promise made to him, in consequence of his faith

and righteousness, included the coming of the Messiah, the blessings of the gospel day, and the salvation of all who shall have been redeemed by the Lord Jesus.

Joseph and Moses are among the most eminent of the typical Saviors, by whose obedience many have been made righteous. Joshua, Samuel, and several others are worthy to be enrolled among the individuals, by whose obedience many were made righteous, and who by God were made eminent instruments of good to mankind.

The prophet Daniel, who was himself a light of the world, and one of the best of our race, has said: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that *turn many to righteousness* as the stars for ever and ever." Dan. xii. 3. Instead of the word "wise" in this text, the margin of Bibles gives the word "teachers;" and there can be no doubt that *wise teachers* are the persons intended. Excepting the Messiah and Moses, perhaps no teacher ever did more good than Paul, or was the instrument of turning more of his fellow men to righteousness. To "turn many to righteousness" is, I conceive, of the same import as to *make* "many righteous."

What a vast amount of sin and misery have often resulted from the disobedience of one man! On the other hand, what an amount of righteousness and happiness have resulted from the obedience of other individuals! The solemn thought that, in every age, by the vicious conduct of one individual parent, many have been made sinners, and by the virtuous conduct of another parent many have been made

righteous, should have a powerful influence on the mind of every parent. The thought may be extended to every instructor of children and youth, every minister of the gospel, and every public ruler of a state or a nation. The more important and elevated the situation is, in which an individual is placed, the greater is his responsibility — the greater the mischief or the good which will result from his conduct.

Let it now be supposed that such views of moral influence should be adopted throughout christendom, and deeply impressed on the minds of people of every rank; let it be understood and felt, that both sin and righteousness may become hereditary, not by "ordinary generation," but by the moral influence of instruction and example; that by the disobedience of one many may be made sinners, and by the obedience of one many may be made righteous; what awful responsibility would be felt by every parent, every teacher of the young, every minister of the gospel, every magistrate or public officer! Each one would then feel that according to his own conduct he might be the instrument of ruin or of salvation to thousands of human beings, of the present or of future ages, and that the influence of his instruction and example may extend and grow wider and wider, through all future generations of men, and to eternity! How certain it is that the general diffusion and practical adoption of these views, would cause a wonderful reformation in all Christian countries, and soon convert the heathen nations to the Christian religion. When men shall understand and truly act under the influence of

such views, they will doubtless find that God is ever ready, by his spirit, to give effect to benevolent exertions. These views when understood and felt, will not, like the doctrine of total sinfulness by nature, have the *torpedo* effect to shock, benumb, and to discourage exertion; but, like the water which Christ gives, it will be in men a fountain of living water, springing up to eternal life.

NO. II.

New Haven Theory of Human Depravity.

In former days, the Calvinistic creed of human depravity, affirmed the corruption of man's *whole nature*, as the consequence of Adam's sin. This theory was modified in some important respects by the Hopkinsians of New England; by whose theory the corruption was limited to the heart or will of man, leaving the mental faculties unimpaired. Still it was admitted that the posterity of Adam are born with a nature or disposition wholly sinful. A still further modification has been advanced and ably supported by Dr. Taylor of New Haven and his associates. To state the hypothesis in authorized language, I shall take my extracts from a "Review of Taylor and Harvey," which appeared in the *Christian Spectator* for June 1829. In opposition

to the doctrine that the whole nature of man is corrupt or sinful, we have the following statement.

“But there are in the constitution of the mind, certain properties, tendencies or principles, which lie back of moral action, and belong to us simply as intellectual and sentient beings. Of this class are the natural appetites, as hunger, thirst; the social affections, as love of children—sensibility to the opinions of others—a feeling of injury when wronged—sympathy with the sufferings of others, &c.: and connected with them all is the desire of happiness, which belongs to us in common with all sentient beings. Now these from the nature of the case are neither sinful nor holy. They result from the inevitable condition of our being; and we can no more cease to be the subjects of them than we can cease to exist. All that is demanded by the claims of duty is to keep them in strict subjection to the rights of other beings, to our obligations to God and our fellow men.” pp. 362–3.

“Hence Dr. Taylor is led to state so emphatically that these constitutional propensities, even in their highest state of excitement, are not in themselves sinful. The sin lies wholly in that act of the will or choice, which decides on their gratification, against the demands of known duty.” p. 364.

I am not perfectly satisfied that the latter extract is in all respects correct; nor that there is no danger to be apprehended from so broad an assertion. May not a person be so situated as to know it to be impossible for him to gratify an excited propensity, and hence have no “act of will” for that purpose, while the excitement is such as to involve an *approved desire* of forbidden gratification or pleasure? If such a desire is indulged and approved by the mind, is not this sinful?

In the first paragraph I see nothing objectionable; and I rejoice that such views of human nature have been proposed, and are acquiring belief. If I have not misunderstood these writers, the New Haven theory asserts that sin is a voluntary transgression of a known law, and that as infants are incapable of moral agency, they are incapable of sin; and that there is no such thing as a sinful nature antecedent to sinful volition, or moral action. They strongly assert that "nature is not itself sinful." Thus far I cordially acquiesce. These writers, however, have a second chapter to their theory of depravity that I also formerly admitted, but which, on reflection, has become to me hard to be believed, if not to be understood. The controversy between the New Haven writers and their opponents is concisely stated by the Reviewer in the following words:

"Dr. Taylor's position that man's nature is not itself sinful, and yet will certainly produce sin, and sin only, is rejected by Mr. Harvey as downright heresy. His fundamental principle is, that *nature is itself sinful*—the efficient and criminal cause of all sin." p. 343.

The following is also given as the opinion of Dr. Taylor:—

"A ground of certainty likewise exists, according to Dr. T. in the mind of each individual of our race, that the first and all subsequent acts of moral agency, will uniformly be sinful, previous to regeneration." p. 375.

It is supposed by these writers, that in moral agents there is a "governing affection," which the scriptures call the heart; that this governing affection is voluntary, and the source of particular voli-

tions. The reviewer says—“This governing affection corresponds to the water which constitutes the literal fountain, and it is this governing affection, according to Dr. Taylor, which constitutes the moral man. This he maintains is entirely sinful from the commencement of moral agency, until God interferes by his immediate power to change this state of the affections, and to place them supremely on himself. From this fountain all external actions spring.” p. 356.

Though Dr. Taylor denies that “nature is itself sinful,” yet his doctrine is “that the entire moral depravity of mankind is by nature.” p. 340.

It having been asserted by these writers “that nature is not itself sinful,” and that various properties of human nature are in themselves neither sinful nor holy; it naturally became a question how it could be certain that the first moral exercises of all our race should be invariably sinful. Whether the reasoning in answer to this inquiry be conclusive or not, it is certainly ingenious and forcible. The following is the language of the Reviewer:

“A child enters the world with a variety of appetites and desires which are generally acknowledged to be neither sinful nor holy. Committed in a state of utter helplessness to the assiduity of parental fondness, it commences existence the object of unceasing care, watchfulness and concession, to those around it. Under such circumstances, then, it is, that the natural appetites are first developed, and each advancing month brings them new objects of gratification. The obvious consequence is, that self-indulgence becomes the master principle in the soul of every child, long before he can understand that this self-indulgence will ever interfere with the

rights, or intrench on the interests of others. Thus by repetition, is the force of constitutional propensities accumulating a bias towards self-gratification, which becomes incredibly strong before a knowledge of duty, or a sense of right and wrong can possibly have entered the mind." p. 366.

"If the temptation presented to constitutional propensities could be so strong in the case of Adam, as to overpower the force of established habits of virtue, in the maturity of his reason, how absolute is the certainty that every child will yield to the urgency of these propensities, under the redoubled impulse of long cherished self-gratification, and in the dawn of intellectual existence." p. 367.

If there be no way to invalidate or set aside any part of this second chapter of the New Haven theory, there must still remain a tremendous obstacle to the influence of education; and the ground of discouragement or despair is nearly equal to Mr. Harvey's hypothesis, "that nature is itself sinful." But I may here ask, In what part of the Bible is it asserted, that the first moral exercises of each individual of our race are sinful; or that all the subsequent exercises, prior to regeneration are of this odious nature; or that all his "external actions proceed from a corrupt or "sinful fountain?" I am not acquainted with any passages of scripture in which either of these hypotheses is clearly asserted, or necessarily implied; and I have a hope that something may be found in the first part of this theory, which will evince that the latter part is in some respects an exaggerated statement. That mankind, as a race, are in a high degree depraved and sinful, is too obvious to be denied; and had the Bible assured us that the first moral exercises of

each individual is sinful, the reasoning of the Reviewer would go very far to show how the dreadful result is or may be produced. But what is true of *many*, may not be true of *all*. Some things may be asserted of our race, considered collectively, which cannot with truth be said of every individual. Admit it to be generally true that the first moral exercise is sinful, does it follow that there are no exceptions? or does it follow that nothing can be done to render the melancholy occurrences less frequent, and the exceptions more numerous?

If the supposed effect results *not* from the fact "that nature is itself sinful," but may be rationally accounted for by the *habit* of self-indulgence, which is formed prior to moral agency; perhaps the evil may be prevented by habituating children to self-denial instead of self-indulgence, at that early period of their existence. How far this might be done, has perhaps never been properly tried, nor even considered. In the infant schools it has been found that education can produce effects on little children, which before the experiment was made would have been deemed impracticable; nor can I doubt that much more is to be done by similar or improved means.

Suppose the Quaker doctrine to be thus far correct, that the Divine Spirit is granted to all, even to children as soon as they become moral agents, to give efficacy to proper means, when employed, for their spiritual benefit. This cooperating with the influence of education, when its principles shall be better understood and faithfully applied, may produce a result very different from what has been generally witnessed, or even anticipated.

In regard to the next hypothesis, that all the volitions of the child, subsequent to the first, will be also of a sinful character till regeneration is effected; two things may be observed. 1. I have seen no proof from the scriptures that one sinful act must necessarily be followed by a succession of acts of the same nature; nor any evidence that the first sinful volition may not be immediately succeeded by *contrition*. 2. As to the interposition of the spirit to produce repentance, this may be constantly granted, and its efficacy may be acknowledged, if repentance immediately succeeds the first sinful act, as properly as if the change be delayed for thirty years.

The remaining hypothesis is, that "all the external actions" of the unregenerate spring from the corrupt fountain of sinful affection. But the first part of the theory may furnish proof that this hypothesis is incorrect. It is there frankly admitted that various properties of human nature are neither sinful nor holy, and I think it must be obvious to these writers, that the properties which they have thus characterized are the proper sources of a multitude of external actions both in children and in adults. The properties enumerated are the "natural appetites"—"social affections"—"sensibility to the opinions of others"—"a feeling of injury when wronged"—"sympathy for the afflictions of others"—and "desire of happiness." In reference to these, the writers concede that "all that is demanded by the claims of duty, is to keep them in strict subjection to the rights of other beings;" and that "the sin lies wholly in that act of the will which

decides on their gratification against the demands of known duty."

In view of these several concessions, I may ask, Does not a very large portion of volitions and external actions result from one or another of the enumerated properties, without violating "the rights of others," or seeking their gratification "against the demands of known duty?" I shall here institute some inquiries in relation to persons who are supposed to be in an unregenerate state.

Do not many of the external actions of such persons originate from their "natural appetites, hunger, thirst," and a fondness for several kinds of food or drink, while they are careful not to violate the rights of others or any known command or prohibition? A child has a desire for strawberries. He knows they are to be had in his father's garden. He, however, is told that better strawberries may be found in the garden of a neighbor, and may be obtained with equal ease. But the boy recollects that his father had prohibited his going for fruit to the neighbor's garden, and had given him free liberty to go to his own garden. From regard to his father's will, the boy forbears to go to the neighbor's garden, and goes to his father's to gratify his appetite. Is this a sinful act?

Many external actions flow from the "social affections;" the love of parents to their children, the love of children to their parents, and the love of brothers and sisters to each other. Would any wise minister reprove parents and children for the common expressions of love and tender regard which he may witness in them one towards another? Would he venture to denounce them as sinful actions?

“Sensibility to the opinions of others,” and “a feeling of injury when wronged,” may and often do occasion reprehensible and sinful external actions; they may also occasion actions in which care is taken not to violate “the demands of known duty.”

“Sympathy for the afflictions of others” is the occasion of a vast multitude of external actions, which I should think any judicious man would hesitate to pronounce sinful.

The common “desire of happiness” will surely account for a large class of human actions, in which it would be difficult to find evidence of a violation of “known duty.” In this class might be included the external actions of men while laboring industriously in their several occupations, to obtain the means of subsistence, and to provide for their families. It is true that men may be aiming at some evil purpose, while this is not perceived by human spectators. But when nothing of evil is perceived, I should doubt the prudence of telling them that all their external actions are sinful, and flow from enmity to God.

In each of the cases which have been mentioned, there may have been the omission or want of that love to God which is his due; but this does not prove that all those actions proceed from a sinful fountain—surely not, if the properties from which they do proceed are “neither sinful nor holy.”

Suppose parents to have children which they think are yet unregenerate, but are nevertheless obedient to their commands, and amiable in their conduct to one another: could any good be expected to result

from telling these children every night that all their amiable actions through the day had proceeded from a corrupt and sinful fountain, and are deserving of God's endless displeasure? Would it not be much better to commend what appeared virtuous and lovely, and then express a hope that they would soon learn to act from love to God, and a desire to please and glorify him in all their ways. The former mode would be a direct method to prejudice their minds against religion, while the latter would tend to win their hearts and excite them to act from the higher motives.

The advocates for each of the theories which have been named, must, it appears to me, be chargeable with daily and gross inconsistency in their manner of treating their children and their neighbors, and in speaking *to* them and *of* them; at one time commending and approving what at another they declare to be nothing but sin, or rebellion against God.*

Before I dismiss this subject, it may be well to observe that the properties which the New Haven writers declare to be "neither sinful nor holy," are nevertheless among the favors of God which I regard as the sources of man's liability to sin. There is not one of them which does not expose us to many temptations. By the same properties, Adam in a state of innocency was exposed to temptation; and by yielding to the temptation, he became a sinner. So it has been with his posterity. By possessing the same properties, the Messiah "was in all points

* See the Illustration in Chap. xiv.

tempted like as we are;" but by duly resisting the temptation, he "was without sin"—nay more, he was a conqueror, and as such was exalted to the right hand of God.

The *Christian Spectator* for December 1830, contains some passages which appear to me not easy to be reconciled with the doctrine that children are totally sinful after they become moral agents till they are regenerated. In the review of Mr. Sprague's *Lectures to youth* I found much to commend. The first of the two paragraphs which I shall quote with approbation, was written by the Reviewer; the other he quotes from Mr. Sprague:

"On this subject, the well known susceptibilities of the youthful mind to deep and permanent impressions both of good and evil, is a topic full of persuasion. No pastor has ever assembled the young of his flock, and addressed them on the great question of their personal salvation, or has brought to their special attention any appropriate subject of doctrine or duty, without feeling that for peculiar effort, in this department of the pastoral office, there is peculiar encouragement."

"It admits of no question, that there is something in the very state of the soul, during the period of youth, which may be said, in a comparative sense, to favor the work of its own sanctification. The understanding not having been brought under the dominion of prejudice, is open to the reception of truth. The conscience not having had its dictates frequently opposed and trifled with, is ready faithfully to discharge its office. The various affections of the heart are easily excited; and more easily than at any subsequent period, may receive a right direction. Who will not say that there is in all this a most desirable preparation for becoming truly reli-

gious; especially when the state of the soul to which I referred, is contrasted with that almost invincible prejudice, that deep moral insensibility, which often results from long continued familiarity with the world."* C. Sp. 648.

NO. III.

Disputed Hypotheses on the existence of Moral Evil.

The perfection of God and the existence of sin, are both admitted facts; but how they are consistent with each other is a question of dispute. Two hypotheses are now before the public.

1. That sin was a necessary means of the greatest good; and was therefore admitted.

2. That sin was an evil incident to the best system of government; and therefore could not be prevented in any system as good as the one which God adopted. It is presumed that the advocates on each side will grant that the existing plan of divine government is as good as God could devise. But if sin was a necessary means of the greatest good, there seems to be no objection to the idea that, in

* April, 1833. Two or three years have passed away since this article on Dr. Taylor's views was written. A principal hypothesis in his scheme I have lately examined in a more extended manner in the article entitled "Review of a Modern Substitute for a Sinful Nature." After writing that Review, I thought of suppressing this Number of the Supplemental Illustrations; but on re-examination, I found that the Review had very little in it which can be regarded as a repetition of what is contained in this article, — and that this contains much that I was unwilling to suppress.

forming his plan, God made arrangements to insure the fall of Adam, and all the sin that has since existed, or will exist to eternity. But this view of the subject is shocking to many pious persons. For, in their opinion, it implies the direct agency of God for the production of what he forbids, and threatens to punish. Besides, if sin is a necessary means of the greatest good, it cannot be in all respects an evil. It must at least be a relative good. How else can it be a "necessary means of the greatest good?" If then another hypothesis had been or can be proposed, less revolting to the benevolent mind, and equally consistent with the perfection of God, it should not be rejected without a candid examination.

The second hypothesis is supposed to imply that it was impossible with God to form any plan of government, as good as the present, from which sin could be excluded. This seems like limiting the wisdom or power of God. But is it not limiting his goodness to assert the contrary? What but the want of goodness can be the reason, if he has not adopted as good a plan as his wisdom could devise? It may also be asked, does not the first hypothesis, as well as the second, seem to limit the wisdom or the power of God? If sin was a *necessary* means of the greatest good, neither the wisdom nor the power of God could have excluded it from any plan as good as the present; and this is all that seems to limit the wisdom or the power of God in the second hypothesis.

But while the two hypotheses appear to be alike as to setting bounds to the wisdom and goodness of the Creator, the second seems to me to have the advantage in some important respects.

It does not imply that sin is in any respect a good or an object of divine approbation.

It precludes the idea of a preconcerted arrangement on the part of God, for producing what he forbids. For sin may be an evil incident to the best plan, and yet not a necessary means of the greatest good. This idea I shall now attempt to illustrate.

A wise and benevolent king resolves to give his subjects a constitution of government, in the highest degree adapted to the general welfare. We will suppose the king, on this occasion, like Moses, inspired by God. The constitution thus produced, among other arrangements, provides for the appointment of a treasurer, to superintend the receipts and disbursements of the national revenues; and also provides that the *press shall be free*, for the discussion of opinions and measures, and for the diffusion of knowledge. The king clearly foresees that these provisions will be very liable to abuse. Yet this abuse is no part of his design, but an evil incident to the best plan.

The treasurer, and those employed by him, will be placed in a state of great temptation; and they will be liable to abuse the power and privilege with which they are entrusted. The liberty of the press is an important means of good, but very liable to abuse. Yet in the opinion of the king, the good will greatly overbalance such incidental evils as it will not be in his power to prevent. We have then a clear case in which moral evil may be an *incident* in the best plan of human government, and yet not admitted as a means of the greatest good, nor of any good at all. It might, therefore, in every view

of it be an evil, odious in the sight of the king; and one, to prevent which as much as possible, he adopts a variety of means. In a similar manner, under divine government, sin may have occurred as an evil incident to the best plan, and not as a necessary means of the greatest good.

The foregoing illustration has not only evinced that moral evil may be incident to the best plan of human government, but also that great favors expose to great temptations, and render people very liable to sin. In the preceding chapters, I have endeavored to show that such is the fact under the government of God, and that man's liability to sin results from divine favors, and not from the divine displeasure. On this hypothesis perhaps, better than on any other, it may be seen how sin is an evil incident to the best plan, and yet not a necessary means of the greatest good.

Let it now be admitted that "God is love," and perfect in all his attributes. Then, from known facts, we may infer, that he deemed it best that there should exist a race of human intelligences, united to bodies of flesh, with animal propensities and passions, and such intellectual faculties as are necessary to moral agency, and moral freedom. Is it not easy to see that all these animal and intellectual properties are *favors*; and that they might be conferred in kindness as necessary means of good, of usefulness and comfort? Can we not also see that the abuse of them might be an evil incident to the best plan that could be devised?

Our animal properties are highly important to us, and yet they greatly expose us to temptation. Our

moral freedom, too, like the freedom of the press, is a great favor, necessary to individual good and public welfare, yet very liable to abuse. Now what more can be necessary to account for man's liability to sin than the possession of such properties and such freedom? Yet we have no evidence that any one of these properties was conferred on us for the purpose of rendering us liable to sin. On the contrary, we have evidence that they were designed as favors. For experience teaches us that when they are duly governed and rightly employed, they conduce to happiness and usefulness; and also that when they are abused or licentiously indulged, such abuse or indulgence brings evil on ourselves, and often on our neighbors.

This view of the subject precludes both the necessity and the propriety of supposing that Adam's offspring were subjected to the curse of a nature wholly sinful, as it fully accounts for their liability to sin on other grounds. It also precludes the necessity of supposing sin to have been admitted as a necessary means of the greatest good, or of any preconceived plan for the production of moral evil. For what God did for the good of man, could not fail to render him liable to sin; so that sin might occur as an evil incident to the best plan of government.

But what, I may ask, can have more of the appearance of a preconceived arrangement for the production of moral evil, and for rendering it inevitable and universal, than the popular hypothesis of an hereditary sinful nature? We may presume that it was neither in the power nor the purpose of Adam,

by his transgression, to entail such a curse on his offspring. If such an effect has occurred, it must have been by the purpose and agency of God, and not an evil incident to the best plan of government. To say the least, the hypothesis of an hereditary sinful nature has the appearance of representing sin as an effect which God *wished* to produce to an awful extent; and not an incidental evil, which could not have been prevented in any plan so much adapted to the good of man as the present.

The New Haven writers have contended ably for the hypothesis that sin is an evil incident to the best plan of government; yet they advance another hypothesis which seems to me of an opposite character. While they deny any such thing as a "sinful nature" in children antecedent to moral agency, they suppose an established connexion, by divine constitution, between the sin of Adam and the first moral exercises of all posterity—in consequence of which, all children become totally sinful, as soon as they become moral agents. However true it might be that the first sin was an evil incidental to the best plan, it seems to me impossible that the sins of Adam's posterity can be properly regarded as *incidental evils*, if they result from an "*established connexion*," or a "*divine constitution*," between Adam's offence and the total sinfulness of all his offspring. What can more clearly suggest the idea of a pre-concerted plan and positive divine agency for the production of moral evil, than such a supposed "*established connexion by divine constitution*?" Can an effect of such universal extent, the product of a *divine constitution*, be an *evil incident* to the best

plan of government—one which the wisdom of Jehovah could not prevent? If such a fatal connexion was established by divine constitution, it would seem that barely omitting to form the constitution might have prevented the dreadful effects. How then could they be but incidental occurrences?

An objector may perhaps urge that, on my own hypothesis, it is by the purpose and agency of God that we all possess those animal properties which expose us to temptation, and by which we are rendered very liable to sin. This I freely admit. But these properties were not *inflicted* on us as a *curse*; they are not evil in themselves; nor were they made a part of our constitution to render us liable to sin. They are good in themselves; they were bestowed on us in kindness, as necessary to our usefulness and comfort. The abuse of them on our part may be clearly perceived as an evil incident to the best plan, or the kindest design on the part of God. That such may have been the fact is as clearly to be perceived, in this case, as it was in the simile adopted for illustration—where it was shown that the kindness of the King exposed his subjects to temptation. But can such things be said or seen on any one of the hypotheses of a nature wholly sinful, entailed as a curse for Adam's offence? For what beneficent purpose could such a nature have been inflicted or entailed? Could it be an expression of God's kindness to his offspring? Is it any thing which was necessary to moral agency, or to our happiness or our usefulness? Is it a property for which we should be thankful, or which we can employ in God's service or for our own benefit? If

not, it bears no resemblance to those animal properties of our nature by which we are exposed to temptation. What then is it but a curse — a curse on children for the sin of parents?

It is impossible for me to see how the New Haven brethren can reconcile their two hypotheses. On due reflection, one or the other will, I think, be abandoned by writers of so much discernment. And on no theory of a nature wholly sinful, which I have ever seen, can I perceive the least ground for maintaining the hypothesis that sin is an evil incident to the best possible plan of divine government.

It may probably be objected against me, that my *first* publication was on the origin of evil; and that, in some particulars, my views and reasonings are now different from what they were in early life. In reply I may say, that all my publications were written according to the light I possessed at the time of writing. Nearly half a century has elapsed since my first publication. The most of the intervening time has been employed by me in ardent inquiries after truth; and I do not think it very wonderful that at the age of seventy-four, I should see cause to dissent from some of the opinions which I entertained at the age of twenty-five.

When I first wrote on the origin of evil, I did not perceive how it could have existence under the government of God, unless it was admitted as a necessary means of the greatest good. It did not then occur to me that sin might be an evil incident to the best form of government, and not a necessary means of good. Having been educated in the belief of an hereditary sinful nature, I had then no other way of

accounting for man's liability to sin. At that period it was foreign from my conceptions that men are rendered liable to sin by the favors they receive from the hand of their Maker.

But the existence of moral evil under divine government, in any view of the subject which has yet been presented, may give rise to questions which the most discerning minds will find it difficult to answer. This circumstance may well excite in every writer both caution and candor — *caution*, lest he be too self-confident in asserting his own opinions; and *candor* towards such as dissent from his views, lest he be found guilty of censuring *opinions* more correct than his own, and *men* more humble than himself. While on the verge of the grave, possessing some opinions very different from those in which I was educated, it affords me much comfort to reflect, that, on whatever side I may have been in the theological controversies, which have occurred in the different periods of my life, God has continually given me such a sense of my own liability to err, that I have never been disposed to ascribe it to wickedness of heart, that others dissented from my views. This has been one of the innumerable favors which God has granted me during a long life, a favor too for which I hope I never shall cease to be thankful.

NO. IV.

Paul's Philosophy of the Flesh and the Mind.

Towards the close of Chapter V. I quoted some passages from the writings of the apostles to show their accordance with the views I have adopted of man's liability to sin. The subject, however, deserves a more distinct illustration. I shall therefore exhibit what appear to me to have been the views of Paul. He has said much more relating to "the *flesh* and the *spirit*," or *mind* of man, than any other of the sacred writers.

The word *flesh* is used in the scriptures in various senses; but when it is contrasted with the *mind* of man it seems to denote the animal properties of human nature—the appetites, propensities, and passions. These, if I mistake not, are by Paul represented as the principal sources of temptation or liability to sin.

It may here be proper to remark, that in some instances Paul uses the word *spirit* in contrast with the *flesh*, in such a connexion and such a manner as to render it doubtful whether it is the Spirit of God or the spirit of man, of which he is speaking. But there are other instances in which it is clear that it is the "mind" or "spirit" of man, which he contrasts with the flesh. It is, however, a truth that those lusts or desires of "the flesh" which "war against the soul," or the spirit of man, at the same time and in the same sense war against the Spirit of God, which dictates to us the path of duty.

The distinction between the flesh and the mind was so great in the view of Paul, that in several instances he speaks of them as two persons or *two men*, united, and one in the other. The flesh or animal part he denominated the "outward man." The mind or spiritual part he called the "inner," or "inward man." The following passages may show that in the view of this apostle, the animal desires or lusts of the flesh are what expose us to temptation, and render us liable to sin.

"For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Gal. v. 17.

"For I know that in me—that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." "I find a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me." "For I delight in the law of God after the *inward man*; but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." "So then with *the mind* I myself serve the law of God, but with *the flesh* the law of sin." Rom. vii. 18, 21, 22, 23, 25.

"Let not sin reign in your mortal *bodies* that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." Rom. vi. 12.

"There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." Rom. viii. 1.

"They that are Christ's have *crucified the flesh* with its affections and lusts." Gal. v. 24.

"I keep under my *body* and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, after I have preached

unto others I myself should be a castaway." 1 Cor. ix. 27.

"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the *old man* with his deeds, and have put on the *new man* which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him." Col. iii. 5, 9, 10.

If I mistake not, these passages clearly suggest the following ideas: That the "mind" or "inward man" is not of a sinful nature, but is very liable to be ensnared, overcome, and brought into captivity by our animal or fleshly propensities or desires;—that these animal desires are to us, as they were to our first parents, the occasion of temptation, or liability to sin—in other words, it is by these fleshly propensities principally, that we are exposed to temptation and moral evil;—that our animal part is *the self* to be denied in taking up the cross to follow Christ;—that regeneration, reformation, conversion, or obedience to the gospel, implies the crucifying of the flesh with its affections, or passions, and lusts; that it behooves Christians to be on the watch, and to keep under the body, and bring it into subjection, lest they become ensnared and ruined by yielding to the inordinate desires of the flesh.

The same thing—our animal nature—appears to be intended by Paul in these passages, by each of the following terms or phrases—"the body"—"the flesh"—"the outward man," and "the old

man." To *crucify the flesh* — to *keep under the body* and *bring it into subjection*, and to *put off the old man with his deeds*, are phrases of similar import; and are all implied in the word *self-denial*. We are not by any of these directions required to extirpate our animal nature, or any property of it; but to subject all its properties to the law of love or the precepts of the gospel. When by any animal property we are tempted to violate the rights of others, or disobey the will of God, for personal gratification, we are to deny ourselves and thus to crucify the flesh, though such acts of self-denial may be to us like plucking out a right eye or cutting off a right hand. Nothing is to be regarded as too dear to part with, when it stands in competition with the will of God, or our duty.

It is, however, still to be observed, that no one of the properties of animal nature is in itself sinful, though they are so commonly the occasions of disobedience. They are the effects of God's kindness to us, and not of his displeasure. With due respect to the will of God, and grateful feelings for his favors, we may lawfully gratify our animal appetites and propensities. But as we derive pleasure as well as nourishment by the gratification of animal appetites, we are tempted to excess or unlawful indulgences, and to the adoption of unlawful means for personal gratifications. On these accounts we have constant occasion to be on our guard, and to watch and pray, lest we fail in the hour of temptation, and like Adam and Eve, eat of forbidden fruit, or of that which is our own in a forbidden manner.

Though by possessing animal properties we are

placed in a state of trial, and are constantly exposed to temptation, the case with us is very different from what it would be if our mind or spirit were itself totally sinful. If such were our condition, what possible ground of encouragement would there be to use means to avoid depravity, or to recover from vice.

What Paul has said of “the *flesh*,” “the *outward man*” and “the *old man*,” may perhaps help us to understand what he meant by the “natural man,” 1 Corinthians, ii. 14. “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.” Dr. Macknight translates “the animal man” instead of “natural man.” If by the animal or natural man be meant the same as the outward man or old man, the meaning may be, and probably is, a man who is under the dominion of fleshly appetites and propensities, and is the opposite of one who keeps under his body, and brings it into subjection. This character involves that “minding of the flesh” which is enmity or opposition to God, his law, and his gospel.

NO. V.

Combe on the Constitution of Man.

The “Essay on the Constitution of Man, by George Combe,” was sent for my perusal by a friend who had read some part of what is contained in the preceding chapters on man’s liability to sin. I have

read the work with much interest, and I hope not without some advantage. Mr. C. is a phrenologist, and his book is a developement of phrenological principles. Of the science of phrenology I am ignorant; I shall, therefore, forbear to censure or applaud what I do not understand. There are, however, in Mr. C's. work many ideas and facts which can be understood, and which demand the most serious consideration. Stripped of technical phraseology, if I mistake not, Mr. Combe's theory embraces the following hypotheses:

That men, as organized beings, are subject to several divine laws, physical, organic, and moral; that the organs of our race are of different classes, and adapted to different purposes; that some of these organs are merely animal, and others moral or intellectual; that the animal organs have respect to self-gratification and self-preservation, while the moral or intellectual organs have respect to the good of others—to our duty to God and man—and that it was the purpose of the Creator that the moral and intellectual organs should have the supremacy, or a directing or controlling influence over the animal part of our nature. The following are some of Mr. C's. remarks on this distinction, and the purposes of the different classes of organs:

“The great distinction between the animal faculties and powers proper to man, is, that the object of the former is the preservation of the individual himself or his family; while the latter have the welfare of others and our duty to God for their end.”
p. 50.

“The animal faculties, therefore, must be restrained in their desires, and directed to their object

by the human faculties, by the sentiments of Conscientiousness, Benevolence, Veneration and Intellect—otherwise they will inevitably lead to disappointment.” p. 62.

In the opinion of Mr. C. all the various organs of mankind tend to happiness, when employed with due reference to the laws of God; and obedience to these laws affords both happiness and safety, while disobedience exposes to evil or suffering. The following is one of Mr. C's. definitions:

“An organized being is one which derives its existence from a previously existing organized being, which subsists on food, grows, attains maturity, decays, and dies.” p. 112.

In thus deriving existence, Mr. C. supposes that the child derives more of the peculiarities of one or both of its parents, than has been generally imagined; that the organs of the brain in the child resemble the corresponding organs of his father or his mother, whether the parents are virtuous or vicious. On such principles Mr. C. speaks of the transmission of good and bad qualities from parents to their children by generation. But lest his meaning should be misapprehended, he subjoins a note, p. 167, which contains the following remarks:

“In using the popular expressions ‘*good qualities*’ and ‘*bad qualities*,’ I do not mean to intimate that any of the tendencies bestowed on man are essentially bad in themselves.—By bad qualities therefore I always mean either *disease*, or *unfavorable proportions* among the organs.”

Mr. C's. hypothesis appears to be this, that the natural organs communicated to the child, may be affected by the moral character of the parents, so

that the child of virtuous parents will have organs more favorable to virtue than the child of vicious parents. Whether this hypothesis is correct or not, it may be impossible to prove that it is false. If we admit it as true, we have an additional motive for all who wish to become parents, to form habits of the strictest virtue, and to abandon or avoid every vicious course or indulgence. It is however to be observed, that if a child be subjected to disabilities or disadvantages by the vices or misconduct of his parents, the less is required of him by the righteous law, which limits the duty of each individual by the extent of his capacity.

There is still a further occasion of evil or disadvantage to the children of vicious parents, which is more certain than what has already been brought to view, and which Mr. C. has noticed in the following manner:

“Further, after birth, it is quite certain that the organs most active in the parents have a decided tendency to cause an increase to the size of the corresponding organs in the children, by habitually exciting them, which favors their growth. According to this law, habitual severity, chiding, and imperious conduct, proceeding from over active self-esteem, and destructiveness in the parents, rouse these faculties in the children, produce hatred and resistance, and increase the activity of the same organs—while those of the moral sentiments and intellect are left in a state of apathy.” pp. 172-3.

This paragraph, notwithstanding its phrenological dress, contains a doctrine which should be impressed on the mind of every parent. Whether it be true or not that the vicious character of a parent

has an unfavorable influence on the organic structure of the child prior to its birth, it is unquestionable that the character and the destiny of the child may be greatly affected by the conduct of his parents towards him after his birth, and from the time he is capable of observing. Nothing, perhaps, is more certain than that peevishness, austerity and harshness on the part of a parent towards his children, tend to produce in them correspondent feelings, dispositions and passions. Hence it is natural to infer that a mild, meek, kind and cheerful temper on the part of parents and nurses, must be of great importance to children, and will tend to produce in them a similar temper and character.

In some respects, Mr. C's. theory presents a pleasing contrast to that of the Westminster Assembly. It represents every human pair as the Adam and Eve to their own offspring, and in a high degree responsible for the character they transmit to their children. Though he admits that a kind of "*organic penalty*" falls on children, as the effect of a vicious character in parents, he supposes an encouraging counterpart to this evil—an *organic reward* or *favor*, as the effect of virtuous and obedient conduct. So far as regard to the welfare of offspring can operate as a motive, the theory of Mr. C. presents powerful inducements to parents to shun the paths of vice, and to cultivate in their own hearts the sentiments of piety and benevolence. On this theory, every person who hopes to be a father, may consider himself as acting not only for himself, but for his posterity; that is, as forming for himself a character which may deeply affect the character of

his children in this world, and perhaps forever. But such also is the fact in regard to the influence of parental example after children are born, and while growing up; so that the hypothesis of Mr. C. only carries back a known law or principle to an earlier period than the birth of the infant.

The distinction which Mr. C. has made between the animal and intellectual parts of the human constitution, accords with Paul's distinction of the "*flesh*" and the "*mind*," or "*the outward man*" and "*the inward man*." If, as Mr. C. supposes, the animal properties were designed for self-gratification and self-preservation, this may account for the fact that men do not feel guilty in the indulgence of these properties, except when this is done to excess, or in violation of the rights of others, or some known law of God. On the same principle, too, we may account for the fact that children, while very young, often manifest a strong propensity to transgress. The animal appetites are among the first of human properties which are called into activity; and if their object is self-preservation and self-gratification or pleasure, by daily indulgence they naturally acquire great strength before the intellectual and moral faculties are capable of distinguishing between moral right and wrong, or of ascertaining the bounds of temperance, the rights of others, or the requirements of God. Hence they are much exposed to temptation, as soon as they arrive at the stature of moral agency.

In view of the real or apparent difficulties which occur on every hypothesis of human nature, and human liability to sin, we have this source of con-

solation, that the Judge of all the earth will do right; that he knows all the disadvantages to which each individual is subjected, and what allowance should be made in each case; and that the following is a known principle of his government—"To whomsoever much is given of him shall much be required," and where less is given the less is required. If a person of feeble intellect, or one who is subjected to all the disadvantages of the grossest form of heathenism, were required to love God and his neighbor "with all the understanding and all the strength" of a Newton or a Locke, there might be ground for alarm and complaint. But the principle of divine requirement resembles an equitable principle of taxation, when each is required to pay according to his ability, be it more or less.

NO. VI.

Popular Hypotheses.

On reviewing the First Part of this work, the opinions of others, to which I had frequently alluded, struck me as so shocking, that I could not but fear some readers might suspect me of intended misrepresentations. I have, therefore, deemed it advisable to collect and exhibit some extracts.

The shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly contains the following propositions:—

"The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself but for his posterity, all mankind de-

scending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression.

“The fall brought mankind into a state of sin and misery.

“The sinfulness of that estate into which man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam’s first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, commonly called original sin, together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.

“All mankind by the fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.”

The Confession of Faith of the same Assembly, in speaking of the fall of our first parents, asserts that they “became *dead in sin*, and *wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body*,” and then adds—“They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.” In the Chapter on “Free Will” it is said, “Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath totally lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation.”

The next extract will be copied from the celebrated Roman Catholic writer, Blaise Pascal.

“It is an astonishing thought that of all mysteries, that which seems to be farthest removed from apprehension, I mean the transmission of original sin, is a fact without the knowledge of which we

can never satisfactorily know ourselves. For undoubtedly nothing appears so revolting to our reason, as to say that the transgression of the first man should impart guilt to those who from their extreme distance from the source of the evil, seem incapable of such a participation. This transmission seems to us not only impossible but unjust. For what can be more repugnant to the rules of our despicable justice, than to condemn eternally an infant, yet irresponsible, for an offence in which he appears to have had so little share, that it was committed six thousand years before he came into existence. Certainly nothing wounds us more cruelly than this doctrine; and yet without this mystery—to us of all others the most incomprehensible, we are incomprehensible to ourselves.” *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 129.

I am aware that the present orthodoxy of New England excludes some of the ideas which have been quoted from the Westminster Assembly. Perhaps no two individuals had more agency in forming what is now called the orthodox faith in our region, than Dr. Hopkins of Rhode Island, and Dr. Smalley of Connecticut. I shall now give a few extracts from the system of Divinity by Dr. Hopkins.

“Adam was considered and treated as comprehending all mankind. His disobedience was the disobedience of the whole, of all mankind; and the threatened penalty did not respect Adam personally, or as a single individual, but his whole posterity included in him, and represented by him. Therefore, the transgression being the transgression of the whole, brought the threatened punishment on all mankind.” Vol. I. p. 292-3.

“By the constitution and covenant with Adam, his first disobedience was the disobedience of all

mankind; that is, the sin and consequent ruin of all the human race, was by this constitution infallibly connected with the first sin of the head and father of the race. By the divine constitution, it was the appointment of God, if the head and father of mankind sinned, the whole race of men, all his posterity, should sin, and in this sense it should be the sin of the whole." p. 309.

"It must be further observed, that there is no reasonable objection to this constitution, in that it not only established a connexion between the sin of Adam and the sinning of his posterity, but that the latter should be born in sin, so as to begin to sin as soon as they begin to act as moral agents." p. 325.

"If by their being his children they become corrupt, they must of consequence be corrupt as soon as they exist or become his children." p. 326.

"Mankind are born totally corrupt or sinful, in consequence of the apostacy of Adam; that is, they have naturally, as the children of Adam, no degree or kind of moral rectitude, and their hearts are full of moral evil." p. 330.

Dr. Smalley, in a sermon on original sin, with much ingenuity discarded several former explanations, and then gave the following as the true explanation of the doctrine:—

"All men are condemned as sinful themselves, and not antecedently to their being so, for the offence of another. Adam, including Eve, was the original introducer of sin. 'By one man sin entered into the world,' and from him it hath descended to all men, and death as the righteous consequence. He begat a son in his own likeness, and that another in his, and so in all succeeding generations. All justly share in the same curse, because all are partakers of the same depravity. Yet by the coming of death upon all men in this way, the infinite of-

fence given to God by the disobedience of our first parents is manifested to this day, and will be to the end of the world. This being the source or inlet, the primary cause of such extensive and so long continued ruin. *It all comes as a token of the divine displeasure, on account of the original apostacy*; though it comes in this righteous order — the personal sin of each individual before his punishment."

The creed of the Andover Theological Institution contains the following items:—

"That Adam, the federal head and representative of the human race, was placed in a state of probation, and that in consequence of his disobedience all his descendants were constituted sinners; that by nature every man is personally depraved, destitute of holiness, unlike and opposed to God; and that previously to the renewing agency of the Divine Spirit, all his moral actions are adverse to the character and glory of God; that being morally incapable of recovering the image of his Creator, which was lost in Adam, every man is justly exposed to eternal damnation."

NO. VII.

Reasoning of Dr. Hopkins.

The following remarks were made by Dr. Hopkins, to show that it could not be unjust in God to regard Adam as the representative of the whole race, and so to connect his transgression with the

fate of his posterity, as to render it certain that they should commence their moral existence with a nature wholly sinful.

“Such a constitution does not appear, and cannot be proved not to be just and good. There was as great a prospect and probability that the first man would not sin, but persevere in obedience, as that any one of his posterity would; yea, much greater, seeing he was created an adult, in the full exercise of his rational faculties; whereas they must come into existence infants, and gradually rise to manhood, through the weak state of childhood and youth, in which they would be more exposed to fall into temptation.” System, Vol. I. 296-7.

If, without being born with a sinful nature, all Adam's posterity would have been more liable to sin than he was, why should a derived sinful nature be thought necessary to account for all we know of man's liability to sin, or the extent of human depravity? I believe that Adam's posterity have been more exposed than he was to temptation, and that this exposedness is really enhanced by the fact that they have to pass through the dangerous stages of childhood and youth to that of manhood—and especially so, as they are much more exposed than Adam was to the pernicious influence of vicious examples and instructions. The hypothesis, therefore, which Dr. H. wished to support, is shown to be unnecessary by his own remarks. I cannot, however, admit his remarks as proof that there could be no injustice in such conduct as his theory ascribes to God. A constitution rendering the destiny of all our race so dependent on a single act of the first man, that if he sinned, the whole posterity must be

doomed to a state of total sinfulness, is not perhaps so easily reconciled to principles of benevolence or equity as many have imagined. There are various views that may be taken of the principle which has been ascribed to God, by which its equity or injustice may be more clearly perceived, than by merely contemplating it in the light of a popular hypothesis.

We will now admit a little change in the constitution. Suppose then that the constitution, instead of establishing a connexion between the sin of Adam and the total sinfulness of his posterity, had established a connexion between his offence and the endless misery of all his offspring, without any regard to the deeds which would be done by them while in the body; would this have been just? If you say no—I ask, why not? Precisely the same reasoning may be adopted in this case as has been adopted in the other. Adam, being a good man and an adult, was less likely to sin than any of his posterity could be, who have to pass from infancy to manhood, through the dangers of childhood and youth. This may be as truly said in the present case, as in the other; but who would think it just that the endless destiny of millions should be made to depend on the conduct of an individual? Let it be remembered that the *principle* in the two cases is precisely the same, and if just in either, it must be in both.

From the manner in which Dr. Hopkins and others have spoken on the subject, it is obvious that they regarded the total sinfulness of our race as the effect of divine displeasure, and as a part of the penalty incurred by Adam's offence. Some light may often be obtained by considering how a supposed

divine principle would appear if adopted by a human government; and it cannot be doubted that many principles of human governments were adopted in the belief that they had been sanctioned by divine example. On such ground we may perhaps account for the British law of *attainder*, which was once in force in our country. By that law the posterity of traitors and felons were doomed to degradation, disabilities and privations for the offences of their parents. When the people of these States freed themselves from the government of Britain, some of them took special care, in forming their constitutions, to exclude the principle of *attainder*, as barbarous and inhuman. It is, however, lamentably true, that a form of this principle is admitted in the slave holding states, by which the offspring of slaves are held and treated as slaves. But this is a great reproach to our country in the view of enlightened men. That the principle of *attainder*, supposed to have been adopted by God, may appear in a clearer light, I shall suggest one or two hypotheses in relation to human governments.

What, at this day, would be thought of a project for so altering the constitutions of the New England States, that, in future, every adult male, who may be convicted of *theft*, shall be doomed to slavery for life, and all his posterity share the same evil, and be regarded as having been born under the "wrath and curse" of the state. Is there in New England a good man who would not reject the proposition with horror?

Or suppose that a country has been newly discovered with a population of several millions, under

one sovereign, and that such a constitution as the one proposed for New England had been so long in operation in the new country, that seven eighths of the inhabitants are now slaves; should we hesitate a moment to pronounce that constitution a relict of barbarism? But odious and inhuman as this species of attainder must be to the enlightened mind, is it not mild and merciful compared with what has been ascribed to God? What is *hereditary slavery*, compared with a nature wholly sinful, inflicted by a law of attainder on all the posterity of Adam? Man cannot inflict so great an evil as the latter; but they can act on the same principle as that on which it has been supposed God acted. Is it not then safe to act on a *divine principle* and to *imitate a divine example*? An equitable principle may surely be adopted by human legislators.

The first President Edwards, as well as Dr. Hopkins, was of the opinion that there could be nothing injurious in constituting Adam the representative of all his posterity. Thus he reasoned—"For there is nothing in the nature of the case itself, that makes it better for mankind that each should stand for himself, than that all should be represented by their common father."

If this be correct reasoning, then surely there can be no objection to adopting the principle in human governments, and reviving in their full extent the principle and laws of attainder. But it is not so clear to me as it seems to have been to those writers, that "there is nothing in the nature of the case itself" from which the injustice of the principle may be shown. Suppose a law of attainder now in force

in this State, and that a good man, overcome by temptation, commits a felony, for which he is doomed to servitude for life. It may be a truth, that any individual of his posterity will be as *liable* as the father was to commit a similar crime under similar circumstances. But, should his posterity be numerous, is it even probable that *all* of them will be guilty of such an offence? The fact that each may be as *liable* to transgress, as the father was, is surely no proof that *all will* be thus guilty. It may be a truth that each of Adam's posterity is as liable to sin as he was; but was it as probable that millions of innocent individuals would fall from their innocence, as that one of that great number would become guilty? If not, how could it be equitable to suspend the fate of millions on the conduct of one?

Another view of the subject may be taken. To take forbidden fruit was *theft*. Suppose then the constitution to have been this—if Adam shall be found guilty of theft, all his posterity shall commence their existence with a *nature wholly inclined to stealing*, and the sin of theft shall be invariably the first moral act of every child of Adam. This would surely be as reasonable as that for Adam's single offence all his posterity should be born with a nature *inclined to all manner of wickedness*. But who can see that there would have been either wisdom or equity in such a constitution as I have supposed—a constitution, which so suspends the fate of millions on the conduct of one, that if he should *steal* they should all be treated as *thieves*, nay *made thieves* by a divine constitution! Was the single theft of Adam a proof that all his posterity

would be thieves? Besides, is it not reasonable enough to treat a person as a thief after he has begun to steal? How often has a child been known to surpass even a good parent in firmness and integrity. How barbarous the principle would be if adopted in human governments — so prejudging children on account of the offence of a parent, as to consign them all to a state prison as thieves, before they know their right hand from their left! What would have a greater tendency to make them thieves, than to treat them as such prior to their knowledge of moral good and evil? Yet such conduct in a human government would be less objectionable than the conduct which the popular doctrine ascribes to God; for no imprisonment short of hell itself, can be so dreadful as a state of total sinfulness.

Not long since much excitement was produced by a controversy on the question, whether "*infant damnation*" was ever an article of the Calvinistic faith. The sound of that phrase is so horrible that we cannot wonder, that a powerful effort was made in favor of the negative of the question, if it was believed that this was the truth. But no well informed writer, it is presumed, will deny the following to be an article of the Calvinistic faith. That besides "the corruption of the whole nature," "all mankind by the fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever." In the phrase "all mankind," infants are unquestionably included. I may then ask, does not this doctrine assert a spe-

cies of "infant damnation" as revolting to the benevolent mind, and as reproachful to God, as was ever believed or even imagined? If not, the reason I think must be that little regard is paid to the meaning of the language; and that what we see of the character and condition of infants in general, is a palpable contradiction to the language of the Westminster Catechism. In general, infants are seen apparently as innocent and as happy as lambs. This, to say the least, is apparently the reverse of a state of total sinfulness, under the wrath and curse of God. What we see in infants corresponds with what the Messiah said of little children. But the popular doctrine seems to me a contradiction to both, and to impute to God a law of attainder more unjust than ever was known to exist under the government of any earthly despot.

NO. VIII.

The Divine Constitution and early History of Man.

Though I have felt constrained to dissent from a belief in such a Divine Constitution as that described by Dr. Hopkins; yet I firmly believe in the existence of a Divine Constitution, of a solemn and interesting nature—one which demands the most serious attention of parents in relation to their offspring.

I believe it to be of divine appointment and divine constitution, that the posterity of Adam have

been born with such animal properties in miniature as rendered our first parents *liable* to temptation and sin. I also believe that by a divine constitution the examples and instructions of parents and others have a powerful influence on the character and condition of children.

To reflecting men it must be obvious that the influence of example and instruction on the minds of children are very great; and if children possess just such animal properties as exposed our first parents to sin, and then are exposed to the pernicious influence of evil examples, nothing more, it seems to me, can be necessary to account for all we know of human depravity. As our first parents were both sinners, if they continued impenitent, their influence must have been pernicious to their offspring; and as the number of sinners became multiplied, the aggregate of evil influence was naturally increased — except when a counter influence was exerted and interposed by the examples of penitent and good men.

Our knowledge of the events before the flood is so imperfect as to render it difficult, perhaps, to account satisfactorily for the wide spread depravity and violence with which the earth became filled prior to the deluge. It is however to be observed that notwithstanding the general spread of wickedness, there probably was no period from the time of Abel to the flood in which there were no good people. Abel, Enoch, and Noah are mentioned not as the only good men, but as men eminent for their righteousness or obedience; and it is not to be supposed that such men lived hundreds of years

in vain as to their influence on others. The men eminent for wickedness indeed seem to have been vastly more numerous than the men eminent for goodness. The "giants" — "mighty men" — "men of renown," spoken of in the book of Genesis, were probably men of great talents, great enterprise, and eminent in doing mischief. Compared with the present, it was then a time of great ignorance in the world; and ignorant people are easily led astray by enterprising demagogues. A few Jeroboams to lead the people into idolatrous practices, and a few Alexanders or Napoleons to promote a spirit of war and violence, might soon occasion the world to be overspread with the various forms of wickedness which prevailed before the flood.

For a long period it seems to have been generally taken for granted, that when Adam fell by sin, he became totally depraved or sinful. But as the scriptures are silent on this point, we have no proof of the supposed fact, nor that he did not become a penitent and reformed man within a week after his first transgression. The strongest evidence of the contrary may probably be found in the general depravity of his descendants. Yet it does not appear that *all* his own children were ungodly men. Cain was a *murderer*, but Abel has ever been renowned as a *righteous* man. How are we to account for the righteous character of Abel on the hypothesis that Adam and all his other children were totally depraved? The righteous *character* of the second son is surely as good evidence that Adam had *not* become totally sinful, as the murderous *act* of the first son is of the contrary hypothesis.

As the scriptures afford no decisive proof that Adam became totally sinful by his first transgression, we may inquire as to the probability of the supposed fact, by comparing the case of Adam with what is common in cases as nearly similar as can be found. We will suppose that prior to the first sin, Adam was truly and habitually a good man. In regard to Moses we are not informed what his character was in childhood; but during a great part of his life he appears to have been one of the best of men. Yet on a certain occasion his "spirit was provoked and he spoke unadvisedly — perhaps revilingly — with his lips." For this public transgression he was denied the honor of conducting the Israelites into the promised land. But did he by this offence become totally sinful? Surely not. Never perhaps had he given better evidence of genuine piety and benevolence than he did after this fall; and though he was not permitted the privilege of entering Canaan, in other respects he received ample testimonials of God's approbation. What evidence have we that it was not so with Adam, although he was excluded from the garden of Eden?

It has not been uncommon for good men, in one form or another, to transgress; but do we on such occasions infer that they become totally sinful? On the contrary, when good men so fall away as to give no evidence of religion or goodness, is it not usually, if not always, by a gradual apostacy or backsliding? If so, is it not judging contrary to all known analogies to suppose that Adam by a single offence instantaneously passed from a state

of perfect and habitual holiness to a state of total sinfulness.

“Adam begat a son in his own likeness.” This is said in relation to Seth; and with great assurance it has been inferred that Seth was born with a nature wholly sinful. In regard to this inference I may remark,

1. The argument assumes for a fact that Adam had become totally sinful; but of this supposed fact I see not the shadow of proof.

2. I think there is no proof that Seth was ever known to sin — no proof that he was not made a partaker of spiritual life, as early as he became a moral agent, and enabled to persevere in holiness to the end of his life. We have no proof either for or against such an hypothesis.

3. We have no evidence that moral character or any moral quality, good or bad, can be transmitted by generation.

4. The declaration “Adam begat a son in his own likeness,” might mean no more than that the son was the image of his father in external form and appearance. It might, however, mean that like the father the son possessed all the properties of a human being. This would imply that, like the father, the son was liable to sin. This, as I conceive, is true of all the children of Adam, who are born without any natural defect; and this should be felt by every parent on the birth of a child — so felt as to excite holy resolutions to bring up the child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

NO. IX.

The Divine Constitution Vindicated.

It may probably be said by objectors, that the constitution which I have supposed to be divine, respecting the influence of instruction and example, involves fearful consequences, when the instructions and examples are vicious; and some may ask, what advantages has this constitution over that supposed by Dr. Hopkins, or even that of the Westminster Assèmbly?

In reply, I frankly admit, that what I have denominated a divine constitution has a gloomy aspect in regard to the children of vicious parents. Still there are things that may be said in its favor, which cannot be said in favor of the others. It seems to be written as on the very *face* of Providence in the different dispositions and morals of different families of children;—and its effects would doubtless be far more obvious than they now are, were it not that the virtuous and the vicious, with their respective influences, are so generally intermixed in the organization of society, and in schools of instruction. But even in this amalgamated state of society, the facts seem to me unquestionable, that good examples and instructions have a favorable influence on the characters of children, and vicious instructions and examples, a pernicious influence. These facts will not perhaps be denied, even by those who maintain that children are born totally depraved. Such being the obvious course of Providence, we

may see the propriety of scripture precepts and maxims. Solomon had doubtless been an observer of the effects of the divine constitution, when he said—"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

Though this constitution has a dark aspect in regard to the children of vicious or negligent parents; there is a bright side to the cloud, on which we can discern both wisdom and benevolence. Men, as moral beings, are influenced by motives; and parents are endued with natural affection for their offspring. Now the divine constitution furnishes the most powerful motives to excite parents to fidelity; and it is adapted to enlist natural affections on the side of virtue and benevolence. On the one hand, the probable ruin of children is presented as a motive to deter parents from the paths of vice; on the other, the blessings of filial virtue, and the salvation of children, are presented as animating motives for parents to set virtuous examples, and to imbue the minds of their children with virtuous principles and precepts.

But the other supposed constitution, as it respects the posterity of Adam, presents to our view but one side of a cloud, and that is as dark and appalling as the "blackness of darkness" itself. It is supposed to have consigned all the offspring of Adam to a state of total sinfulness, and to hold its victims in this condition till they are fitted for destruction, unless God in his sovereign mercy shall snatch them as brands from the burning. This dreadful doom is supposed to have been passed upon them, not for their own offences, but on account of Adam's

transgression which was committed long before they had existence. I have meditated much on this supposed constitution, and have not been able to discover in it any trait which indicates a divine origin. It seems rather like a project of a monarch to bring all his subjects into a state of condemnation, that his sovereignty may be displayed in saving some and destroying others, according to his pleasure. But "*God is love.*"

Perhaps some light may be obtained respecting what I believe to be the divine constitution, by considering how the *temporal* happiness of children is made to depend on the conduct of their parents. It may, at first view, seem hard, that children should endure suffering, as the consequence of sloth, prodigality, or intemperance on the part of parents. Yet we see that such is the fact; and that children, in consequence of such vices in their parents, not only often suffer the evils of poverty, but are trained up in habits which tend to their injury through life. In another view of the subject, however, we may see that these evils are incident to a wise and benevolent arrangement, which was intended for the benefit of both parents and children. It is a part of that constitution which connects competency and comfort with industry, frugality, and temperance. Parents who are eminent for these virtues, generally have a competency for themselves and their children; and their children grow up in the virtuous habits of their parents. Who does not see that it is kind in God thus to connect the temporal good of children with parental prudence and fidelity? But this constitution could

not be complete, and scarcely could it be said to exist, if sloth, prodigality and intemperance were also followed with the same happy results. That part of the constitution, therefore, which exposes the children of idle and dissipated parents to suffering, is obviously necessary and useful; and furnishes no ground of objection to the perfect benevolence of the Deity, or his government.

That constitution which so connects the *temporal* welfare of children with the good or bad management of their parents, is of the same nature with that which connects the *moral character* of children with good or bad examples and instructions. Good examples and instructions are good seed; and bad instructions and examples are bad seed; and whichever is sown in the mind of a child may be expected to spring up and grow. For this is one of the cases to which the maxim is applicable. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

Children are formed by their Maker to be influenced by example. They seem to have an *imitative instinct*, and they will try to imitate that which is good, or that which is bad. No child will ever learn either to *swear* or to *pray*, except he be taught by precept or example; but he will learn to do either or both, according to the instructions and examples of parents or others.

This constitution differs from that supposed by Dr. Hopkins, not only in being more legibly written on the face of providence, but in its being a constitution, the wisdom and benevolence of which can be perceived by the candid and rational mind. I never could discover any *good end*, which could be

obtained or proposed, by dooming to a state of total sinfulness the posterity of Adam, on the condition of his disobedience. Nor does there appear to be any natural connexion between his offence and the sinfulness of an infant; and the supposed universality of the effect seems to preclude the idea that it was an evil incident to the best plan of government. Indeed it is difficult for me to discover any such thing as *best* or even *good* in such a constitution.

But in what I have supposed to be the divine constitution, we can see a good end; and we see nothing inconsistent with the most benevolent purpose. Though the children of vicious parents are subjected to great disadvantages, and are much exposed to form vicious characters, yet this does not occur as by an arbitrary act of God, for which no good reason appears; but as the natural effect of bad example, and as an evil incident to a wise constitution. This constitution has no such object as that of *making children sinful*. Its object is to encourage and induce parents to avoid the ways of vice, and to train up their children in the way they should go. Parents who will not regard this law of providence, expose their children to evil consequences—to the very evils from which the constitution was designed and adapted to save them.

Besides, though by this constitution, children of vicious parents are much exposed to form vicious characters, yet it does not consign them to a state of total sinfulness, as soon as they are born; nor even when they begin to deviate from the path of virtue. The first act of violating conscience may

be accompanied with great trepidation; but if not called to repentance the child may go on from step to step, hardening in sin, and more and more fearless of the consequences, till he may be said to commit iniquity with greediness. But let any observing Christian parent say, if he can, that he has seen a child who gave evidence of total sinfulness. I very much doubt whether such a parent can be found on earth or in heaven. What pious parent does not know and feel, when he first discovers a vicious disposition in a child, that this disposition may be strengthened by indulgence, or by exposure to evil examples? On the first discovery in a child of a disposition to imitate the *bad* example of his parents, it may be very proper and useful for the parent humbly to confess his own fault to the child, and express a fear that the child will be ruined by following his example. Would not this be unspeakably more adapted to save the child, than giving him a lecture on his total sinfulness by nature, and his ruin by the sin of Adam. The latter mode of talking to children has, in my opinion, been too long practised already, and has done much to blind the eyes both of parents and children, in regard to their real guilt.

There is perhaps scarcely any thing at this day more wanting in our land, than correct views of the constitution of which I have been speaking, and of the importance of regarding its dictates in the business of education. I hope and believe, that the Sunday schools and infant schools, with the improvements which may naturally be made in conducting them, will hasten the day, when Christian

parents will better understand the divine constitution, and will be convinced that children are so far from being totally sinful by nature, that they are capable of being trained up in the way they should go. I have scarcely a doubt that the time will come when it will be seen, that there is as much encouragement to cultivate the minds of children, as there is to cultivate the earth, — and that the work may be so performed as to insure as constant success in the former case as in the latter. In both cases there will always be reason to say, that “God giveth the increase,” and in both cases this truth should always be felt, and thankfully acknowledged.

As in agriculture, so in education, it is of great importance to ascertain the most profitable seed, and the best manner of sowing. God’s instruction to the Israelites may aid us in the inquiry, respecting the best seed to be sown in the minds of children. His directions to parents, to explain the meaning of the Passover, in answer to the inquiries of the children, suggest the importance of impressing the minds of the young with such facts and occurrences, as are adapted to excite a sense of God’s power and kindness, and the danger of offending him, by abusing his favors. Another of God’s directions teaches us, that the divine precepts are good seed, and such as should be sown with great diligence and care. “These words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” Deut. vi. 6, 7.

The two passages alluded to may indicate the seed which Christian parents should sow in the minds of their children. The gospel institutions should be explained as referring to the love of God in sending his Son to be our Savior, from bondage to sin, as Moses was sent to save the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt. As the parents in Israel were to teach diligently the commandments of God by Moses, so Christian parents should diligently teach the precepts of God as delivered and explained by his beloved Son. But where shall we find a divine injunction or a scripture example for imbuing the minds of children with the doctrine, that they all sinned in Adam, and derived from him a nature wholly sinful? As no such injunction or example is to be found in the Bible, I deem this fact as good proof that neither Moses nor the Messiah had any belief in the utility of such a doctrine, and that what Paul said of the moral consequences of Adam's sin has been greatly misapprehended by Christians.

If the popular doctrine, of a nature wholly sinful, derived from Adam by generation, is now as true and important as its advocates have imagined, it was doubtless so in past ages. Is it then to be admitted that the Westminster Assembly were better informed on this subject than either Moses or the Messiah? or that these Heaven-taught Instructors would have omitted to inculcate a doctrine, a belief of which was essential to the salvation of mankind? If not, how is the fact to be accounted for, that this doctrine was never uttered nor even alluded to in any of the sermons exhortations, or warnings, de-

livered by either of these legislators and envoys of Jehovah? There must, it seems to me, have been a great *defect* in their ministry, or a great *mistake* on the part of the Westminster Divines, and the several classes of their adherents.

NO. X.

The Reasons assigned for the Second Commandment.

In the reasons assigned for the second commandment, we have a contrast which may aid in illustrating the divine constitution, relating to the consequences of parental example. It appears in the following words:—

“For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers on the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.”

There are several ways in which the sins of the fathers may be visited on their children.

1. The declaration may be verified when public calamities are brought on a nation by the iniquities of their rulers or *civil fathers*.

2. It may be verified in more private calamities brought on particular families of children, by the vices of their parents.

3. It may be verified in the pernicious *moral effects*, which the wicked examples of parents have on the characters of their offspring.

When the iniquities of the fathers are visited in moral effects on the characters of the children, there is in this something awful and alarming — something more to be deprecated than when calamities only are inflicted. These moral effects may result from the vices of rulers or civil fathers, as well as from the vices of more private parents. It was thus that “Jeroboam the son of Nebat made Israel to sin.” Though these effects are awful, they are the natural consequences of vice in rulers and parents, and seem clearly to be evils incident to a wise constitution. And it may be proper to inquire whether the fact, that they are but incidental effects, is not suggested in the other part of the contrast — “showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.”

The opinion has been advanced by different writers that there is an ellipsis of the word “generations,” in this part of the contrast, and that the meaning would be more clearly expressed by reading — “showing mercy unto *thousands of generations* of them that love me and keep my commandments.” This makes the contrast more clear, full and striking. It also naturally suggests the idea, that “showing mercy” is the grand design and work of Providence — the work in which God delights; and that inflicting evil is “his *strange work*” or an *incidental work*, in which he has no pleasure — incidental to that very constitution which was designed for the highest good of mankind, and wisely adapted to induce them to shun the paths of vice and misery. There is another passage in the writings of Moses, which seems to corroborate these ideas: —

“ Know, therefore, that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a *thousand generations*; and repayeth them that hate him to the face, to destroy them. He will not be slack to him that hateth him; he will repay him to his face. Thou shalt, therefore, keep the commandments and statutes and judgments which I command thee this day to do them.” Deut. vii. 9, 10, 11.

In this passage, the “*MERCY*” of God to a “*THOUSAND GENERATIONS* of them that love him,” is first stated; then the evils which are repaid to the wicked; the inference follows; showing that the great design of the whole is to induce men to obey the Lord, that they may be partakers of his mercy: — “Thou shalt, *therefore*, keep the commandments, and the statutes and the judgments which I command thee this day to do them.” “Thou shalt *therefore*” — Wherefore? Because the whole constitution was designed to induce men to be obedient that they may be happy, and because, for this purpose, both the good and the evil are set before them.

A similar view of the divine constitution is given by Moses in the 30th chapter of the same book — “See, I have set before thee life and good, death and evil; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, *that thou mayest live and multiply.*” Again, “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death,

blessing and cursing; *therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.*" Verses 15, 16, 19. There are various ways in which vicious parents are repaid to their faces by the providence of God, the most of which are the natural effects of their own vices. Painful diseases, sudden deaths, poverty and disgrace, are natural effects of drunkenness and debauchery. Ruin of characters and estates, imprisonments, and ignominious punishments, are common effects of felonious deeds on the part of parents. In many of these evils their children have a painful share. The moral effects on children are still more to be deplored. How often and how awfully are vicious parents repaid to their faces in the vices of their children. Parents are less sure to propagate their peculiar forms and features by generation, than they are to propagate their vices by example. *Wheat* is scarcely more sure to produce *wheat*, than evil examples in parents are to produce *vicious imitations* in their children. This might indeed seem a dreadful constitution for God to establish, if such results were its direct objects. But this is not the fact; these results are evils incident to a wise constitution, whose object is to promote the virtue and happiness of both parents and children, by presenting the most powerful inducements to live in obedience to the divine will. Who does not see that a benevolent parent may have the same good end in view, the real welfare of his children, while he manifests his approbation of what is good in their conduct, and his disapprobation of what is evil or vicious? On the same principle the divine constitution is formed.

But how obviously defective would be the constitution, if good and bad examples were equally sure to contribute to the happiness of children. Yet so far as we are able to discern, the rewards, both of virtue and vice, in the present life, are generally the natural effects of obedience and disobedience; and who knows that this will not be the case in the world to come? If it be so, then, in a sense truly impressive, it may be said, "The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him; and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."

How can it be true that God rewards every man according to his works, if the rewards are the *natural effects* of obedience or disobedience? God is the author of the constitution which connects obedience with pleasure, and vice with pain. The bread procured by labor is the gift of God, as really so as was the manna from heaven, by which the Israelites were fed. "He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand; but the hand of the diligent maketh rich." Such is the ordinary course of divine providence. The rewards in these cases are seen to be natural effects of sloth on the one hand, and of diligence on the other; yet they result according to a divine constitution; and the hand of the Lord is seen in this wise distribution of rewards according to the works of the different agents.

NO. XI.

Coleridge on Original Sin.

In the "Aids to Reflection," Mr. S. T. Coleridge has some views on the doctrine of original sin different from any I have before seen. If I have been successful in my inquiries to ascertain his meaning, the following are his ideas. The phrase *original sin* is a pleonasm. There is no such thing as derived or hereditary depravity, in the common acceptation of the terms. As Adam fell by his own act, so it has been with each of his posterity. Each man's own "evil will" is his original sin. But this original sin is "a mystery," not to be explained. Some extracts may justify the statement now given of his views.

"In this sense of the word *original*, and in the sense before given of *sin*, it is evident that the phrase *original sin* is a pleonasm, the epithet not adding to the thought, but enforcing it. For if it be sin it must be original; and a state or act that has not its origin in the will, may be a calamity, deformity, disease, or mischief; but sin it cannot be." p. 164.

"A moral evil is an evil which has its origin in the will. An evil which is common to all must have a ground common to all. But the actual existence of moral evil we are bound in conscience to admit; and that there is an evil common to all is a fact; this evil, therefore, must have a common ground. Now this evil ground cannot originate in the Divine will; it must, therefore, be referred to the will of man. And this evil ground we call ori-

ginal sin. It is a mystery, that, is a fact, which we see, but cannot explain; and the doctrine a truth, which we apprehend, but can neither comprehend nor communicate." p. 174.

"The corruption of my will may very warrantably be spoken of as a consequence of Adam's existence — a consequence, a link in the historic chain of instances where that of Adam is the first. But that it was on account of Adam, or that this evil principle was, *a priori*, inserted or infused into my will by the will of another — this is no where asserted in scripture, explicitly or by implication. It belongs to the very essence of the doctrine, that, in respect to original sin, every man is the adequate representative of all men." p. 176.

The phrase "the will of man," may mean either the *faculty of willing*, or its *volitions*. In some instances it may be uncertain which of these is intended by Mr. C.; but in general it is pretty obvious that he means the faculty of willing; and if I understand him, he supposes original sin to be an evil in this faculty, produced by a self-determining power. The following passages may render this meaning still more obvious.

In p. 170 he used the words "the corrupt and sinful nature of the human will" as exegetical of "original sin." In page 172, having spoken of the divine law as "positively good," he says — "Whatever resists, and, as a positive force, opposes *this* in the will, is therefore evil. But an evil in the will is an evil will; and as all moral evil is of the will, this evil will must have its source in the will. And thus we might go back from act to act, from evil to evil, *ad infinitum*, without advancing a step." In the two paragraphs next following the last quo-

ted words, we have ideas which deserve attention.

“We call an individual a bad man, not because an action is bad, but because it has led us to conclude from it some *principle* opposed to the law, some private maxim or by-law in the will, contrary to the universal law of right reason in the conscience, as the ground of the action. But this evil *principle* must be grounded on some other principle which has been made determinant of the will, by the will's own self-determination. For if not, it must have its ground in some necessity of nature, some instinct or propensity imputed, not acquired, another's work, not our own. Consequently, neither act nor principle could be imputed, and, relatively to the agent, not original, not sin.”

“Now let the ground on which the fact of an evil inherent in the will is affirmable in the instance of any one man, be supposed equally applicable in every instance and concerning all men, so that the fact is asserted of the individual, *not* because he has committed *this* or *that* crime, or because he has shown himself to be *this* or *that* man, but simply because he is *a* man—let the reader do this, and he will have before him the precise import of the scripture doctrine of original sin.” p. 173.

Mr. Coleridge was aware that the popular view of man's liability to sin confounds the distinction between crime and calamity, and ascribes an evil nature in man to the anger of God on account of the sin of Adam. He seems also to have been embarrassed with the belief that sin can be accounted for on no other hypothesis than that of an evil cause. To avoid one of the difficulties and solve the other, he has ventured to assert an “evil inherent in the will of man,” which constitutes it an

“evil will;” and he talks about the “corrupt and sinful nature of the human will.” This “evil will” is what he calls “original sin,” and “common to all;” so that it may be affirmed of any man, not on the ground of a sinful act, but “simply because he is a man,”—just as we should say of a particular wolf, he is *carniverous*, not because he has killed a sheep, but simply because he is a *wolf*. But with all the respect I feel for Mr. C., as a learned and good man, I cannot persuade myself that he has shunned the difficulty which he wished to avoid, or solved the difficulty of accounting for the first evil in man by an evil cause. His opinion appears to be, that there is universally a radical defect, or evil in the faculty of willing, or the will itself, amounting to a “corrupt and sinful nature of the human will;” and that this sinful nature of the will is the property of every man as a man, as truly as the carniverous appetite is the property of the tiger as a tiger. But did the tiger form his own carniverous appetite? Or did man form his own faculty of willing, with an “evil inherent.” Mr. C. indeed supposes a self-determining power in the will; but if there be also in the will a radical evil, what can the self-determining power do more than to enable the will to choose according to its own “sinful nature?”

In page 169 Mr. C. discards the hypotheses of “sin *inflicted*,” or “a *tendency* to sin, *implanted*.” Of “sin *inflicted*” he says, “this would be calamity.” Of a “*tendency* to sin *implanted*,” he says, “for which let the planter be responsible.” But what better is a “corrupt and

sinful nature of the human will," or "an evil inherent in the will," than "sin inflicted," or a "tendency to sin implanted?" Why may we not say of each of these kinds of evils as he has said of some of them—it "may be calamity, deformity, disease, or mischief; but *sin* it cannot be?"

In the passage last quoted, Mr. C. has contrasted "disease" and "sin" as incompatible with each other. Yet in page 90 he has the following remark — "I profess a deep conviction that man was and is a *fallen* creature, not by accidents of bodily constitution, or any other cause which human wisdom in a course of ages might be supposed capable of removing; but *diseased* in his will, in that will which is the true and only synonyme of the word, I, or the intelligent self." Can a "*disease*" of the will be less a *calamity* than a disease of the understanding? And why is not a disease in the will as incompatible with the idea of sin, as disease in any other faculty of the mind or the body? And if the disease be universal among mankind from their first existence as moral agents, may we not truly say "sin it cannot be," it is "another's work, not our own?" To attempt to trace back the evil through an indefinite series of volitions to the first act of the agent, and then account for this act by a self-determining power in the will, affords me neither light nor relief. If the series of volitions is to be accounted for by an "evil will," or an "evil inherent in the will," the inquiry then arises, what caused or occasioned the radical evil in the will itself? Can a self-determining power account for such a defect of the will antecedent to its first volition?

If not, how does Mr. C.'s hypothesis solve any difficulty? If it is difficult to account for the universality of man's liability to sin, without the hypothesis that all mankind commence their moral existence with an evil will, it is surely not less difficult to account for the universality of an "evil will" by a self-determining power in each individual. And of what advantage can a self-determining power be, if its first effect is to produce an evil, in the will of every human agent that possesses it? If such be the universal effect of possessing such a power, has not this power been a curse rather than a privilege to our race?

If Adam became a sinner without an antecedent "evil inherent in his will," why may it not have been so with his posterity? I admit that liability to sin has been common to all the offspring of Adam. But liability to sin is not a *sinful liability*, and no more implies an "evil will" in the descendants of Adam than in himself. The very properties by which Adam was constituted a human being, capable of moral obedience and happiness, rendered him liable to both sin and suffering. Yet all these properties were "very good." They were not the effects of an evil will or any other evil cause; nor were they given for an evil purpose. The same may be said of the properties of Adam's posterity.

If Mr. C. believed that each of our race is chargeable with original sin, consisting in "an evil inherent in the will," and resulting from a self-determining power, I do not wonder that he deemed the fact "a mystery," and the doctrine one which can be "neither comprehended nor communicated."

But the fact that mankind are all liable to sin is no more a mystery than the facts that they have been liable to sufferings and mistakes. Questions may be asked in relation to either of the facts, which perhaps no man can answer in a manner entirely satisfactory even to himself; and the same may be said of every other fact or doctrine. Yet much of truth may be obvious respecting them. What intelligent man does not know that great favors expose men to great temptations? and who has not been himself "drawn away by his own lust and enticed?" As he is conscious of having been thus tempted himself, he may very naturally infer that it is so with others, and that it was so with Adam.

Who does not know that a man may be tempted to sin by an appetite or desire which in itself is innocent? Hunger and a desire for food are in themselves innocent. But to satisfy the cravings of hunger, a man, in certain situations, may be tempted to violate the rights of others and the law of love. If when thus tempted he acts against the dictates of conscience to satisfy his hunger, he is a transgressor; but no part of the sin consists in the hunger which exposed him to temptation. The sin is found in the volition by which he resolved to violate conscience, rather than longer to endure the cravings of an innocent appetite.

As sin is a transgression of the law, every sinner must have been a transgressor. But every person must be liable to sin before he can become a sinner; and I think it has been shown that liability to sin results from other sources than that of possessing a sinful nature or an "evil inherent in the will." It

is generally admitted that our first parents were not created *sinners*, nor with "an evil inherent in the will;" yet they were liable to sin. In these particulars, they were perhaps "adequate representatives" of all their offspring.

Though in the preceding paragraphs I have used the phrase, "a self-determining power," and have often seen it in the writings of others besides Mr. Coleridge, I am not certain that I clearly understand what others mean by the words; and I suspect that they are used with a variety of meanings by different persons. If by the phrase is meant that God gives to accountable beings, a power to choose their own ways, so that they are really free agents in choosing, and not machines, moved without voluntary agency on their part, then I hold to the doctrine of a self-determining power. But if by the phrase be meant, that the agent possesses a power to choose, which is independent of the all-sustaining power and agency of God, or that he chooses without any influence from motives, I am not a believer in the doctrine. For I doubt whether it is possible with God to invest a being with power to act independent of his Creator; and if a person could choose without any influence from motives, it might be questionable whether such volitions would possess any moral quality, good or evil.

NO. XII.

Parental Affection.

The peculiar affection of parents for their children is called "natural affection," and is regarded as a constitutional property of our race. It may also be called an animal affection, as it is common to various species of animals, from the elephant down to the ant. Among the inferior animals this affection is shorter in duration than among mankind; but perhaps not less ardent while it operates. In all animals which live together in pairs, something of parental affection is seen in both parents; but it is commonly stronger in the female than in the male.

Being "without natural affection," is spoken of by Paul as an odious characteristic in some of the heathen, or as a trait indicative of a vile character. But possessing this affection is not a proof of that love which is the fulfilling of the law. For some persons of a vicious character have strong affection for their offspring.

As parental affection is an animal property, like other animal properties, it is usually possessed by the vicious as well as by the virtuous. Like other animal properties, too, it should be subjected to the law of God, and when thus subjected it is subservient to human comfort and usefulness. I may add, that this affection, like other animal properties, exposes mankind to temptation and sin. In how many instances have affectionate but poor parents been tempted to steal food to relieve the hunger of their

children, and save them from starving! How often has parental affection exposed parents to deviate from the truth in speaking of their children, to conceal or to palliate their vices, or to represent their talents, their attainments, or their virtues as greater than they really were! Indeed, there are a multitude of ways in which parental affection exposes parents to sin. But who on this account will say that natural affection is an evil, or of a sinful nature? These affections are among the properties of human nature which the New Haven theory denominates as "neither holy nor sinful," but they are capable of being made subservient to either good or bad purposes. They may be sources of comfort and usefulness, or the occasion of vice and misery.

Though parental affection is common to various tribes of animals, and on that account may be termed natural or animal, yet in mankind it acquires a moral character by being subjected to a moral law, or indulged in violation of that law. In the one case it becomes a virtuous affection, and in the other it is vicious or "inordinate affection." The most pious and benevolent mother may not be able to exercise the same affection to a neighbor's child that she does to her own; but she may treat the neighbor's child with such kindness as she desires for her own from the neighbor. If a mother, to favor her own children, violates the law of kindness towards her neighbor, her affection then assumes a selfish and vicious character. It also assumes a vicious character, when it disposes parents to pamper the bodies of their children to the injury of their health, or to the neglect of their souls—and

also when it disposes them to encourage in their children such propensities, as should be discountenanced and subdued. By pursuing such courses, parents injure their children, and bring evil on themselves and on society.

If we reflect on the helpless condition of human infancy—the length of time from the birth of a child to the period when it is able to provide for itself, and the extent of care and kindness requisite to its preservation, we shall be convinced that parental affection is a property of inestimable importance. Without it, how could our race have been continued and multiplied? How few children would have lived to adult age had all parents been “without natural affection!” When benevolence is wanting, natural affection operates as a substitute, and excites to the care and kindness which is necessary to the preservation of infants.

In several respects parental affection is like various other properties of animal nature, all of which were bestowed in kindness, but are liable to abuse, and often expose to temptation. The latter circumstance, however, is no proof that any one of these properties is in itself evil. If in consequence of Adam’s apostacy there was a “corruption of the *whole nature*,” of himself and his descendants, then of course natural or parental affection must be wicked and abominable in the sight of God. It has been said that the Stoics of ancient times regarded both parental and filial affections as *vicious*; and if the doctrine of the Westminster Catechism is true, every volition in the unregenerate which proceeds from parental affection, “deserves God’s

wrath and curse both in this life and that which is to come." How perilous then must it be for a mother to nurse her beloved infant! Penitent persons may have felt guilty of yielding to such temptations as result from natural affection; but what good mother ever felt remorse on account of finding in herself strong parental affection for her children? Suppose we should hear a mother pray that God would remove from her heart all parental affection, and forgive her sin in having indulged it so long; should we not suspect the woman of insanity? But if the doctrine of total sinfulness by nature be correct, why would not such a prayer be perfectly proper? Surely we may pray to be delivered from all affections which are morally evil. I suspect however that no sane person ever felt parental affection as in itself a moral evil or sin. We have no occasion to pray that any one of our natural properties may be eradicated; we have only to pray that we may be enabled to keep all our natural or animal propensities in due subjection to the law of love.

NO. XIII.

Thoughts on Conscience.

The mind of man seems to possess several properties adapted to the different purposes of perceiving, remembering, comparing, reasoning, judging and willing. Conscience is either a faculty in some respects different from any of these, or it may be

the faculty of judging as applied to moral objects or qualities. It is often employed in judging of the truth or falsehood of doctrines when proposed for reception; but its principal business is to judge of the moral quality of human actions, and particularly of a person's own actions—such as have been done, are now doing, or are proposed to be done in future.

The word conscience seldom occurs in the common version of the Bible, except in the writings of Paul. If he wrote the epistle to the Hebrews, he used this word in his several epistles *twenty-five* times. Peter used it *three* times. It is *once* used in the gospel of John. These I think are all the instances in which it is found in the Bible. John, however, in his first epistle, seems to use the word "*heart*" as a substitute for conscience, when he says, "If our *heart* condemn us," and again, "If our *heart* condemn us not." The same use of the word heart is perhaps to be found in other parts of the Bible. Conscience is a property or faculty common to people of different countries, and its dictates accord with the moral light enjoyed or possessed by different individuals. Paul speaks of "Gentiles who do by nature the things contained in the law—their conscience bearing them witness." We read of a "good conscience" and an "evil conscience"—of a "pure conscience," and a "defiled conscience"—of a "weak conscience" and a "conscience void of offence"—also a "conscience seared as with a hot iron." A good conscience is one whose dictates have been obeyed, and an "evil conscience," one whose dictates have been violated. A "defiled conscience" may be one which has been mis-

led by fleshly lusts, or impure desires; and a pure conscience one that is free from such defilements. A "weak conscience" is the conscience of a man who is weak in knowledge of what may or may not be lawfully done. Men of *seared consciences*, appear to be such as have become so habituated to disregard the dictates of conscience, that it has lost its power, and has little influence to restrain them from crimes.

From the various things said of conscience, I think we may infer, that it is a property implanted by our Maker in the minds of his accountable offspring, to be their Monitor and Guide in respect to what is right or wrong in moral actions. It has been called "God's vicegerent;" and she is a sovereign who demands implicit obedience to her dictates. On the obedient she bestows pleasure, and on the transgressor she inflicts pain. Towards the latter she acts the part of an *accuser*, a *witness*, a *judge*, and an *executioner*. When a transgressor has succeeded for a considerable time in concealing his crimes from fellow men, conscience has arrested him and brought him to justice, constraining him to confess his offences. It surely must be of God, that a man, whether willing or not, has to carry about in his bosom one from whom he can neither flee, nor conceal his crimes. Other properties of the mind often act as friendly auxiliaries to conscience, while the will too frequently acts the part of a rebel. This occasions a civil war and much domestic misery.

Conscience is like the just judge on the bench, determined, if possible to do right, yet liable to be

misled by imperfect views of the law, by misrepresentations of facts, or false testimony. While her decisions are seen according to the light she obtains, they are sometimes incorrect, and very different from what they would have been had she possessed more light, and a clear view of the whole ground. It is, however, a pleasing thought that God limits our duty by the extent of our understanding; and "if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."

Besides imperfection in knowledge, there is another source from which conscience is liable to be misled. The lusts of the flesh, which war against the soul, are often so clamorous as to bewilder the understanding, and misdirect the decisions of conscience. Nor is it to be doubted that one conscience is often misled by paying undue regard to the decisions of other consciences—just as the judge of a court may be misled by an undue deference to precedents, or the former decisions of celebrated judges. Perhaps, however, there is nothing by which conscience is more frequently misled, than party passions. These demons of mischief seem to have not only a power to prevent the discovery of truth, but to present evil in the garb of good, and good in the garb of evil.

Conscience always condemns us when we disobey her dictates; and she is right in so doing. For we are always guilty when we do that which we *know* to be wicked, or *believe* to be so. It does not, however, hence follow, that we are always guiltless when we obey the dictates of conscience. For we

may be under the influence of evil passions, which mislead conscience or prevent her from clearly discovering what is right. But even in this case, our sin does not consist in obedience to conscience, but in the indulgence of evil passions and prejudices, or a wicked disposition.

Paul once verily thought he ought to do many things contrary to Jesus of Nazareth; these he did in persecuting the Christians. After he became a Christian he could say, "I have walked in all good conscience before God unto this day." This declaration implied the whole course of his persecuting career. Yet he did not hold himself guiltless in what he had done; for he had been "exceeding mad" against the Christians, and had pursued them with unrelenting cruelty. But he obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly and in unbelief. His ignorance did not excuse the malignity of his passions; yet his guilt would have been far greater than it was, had he acted against the dictates of his own conscience.

Paul was a Jew both by descent and by education, and he was of the strictest sect of the Jewish religion, a pharisee. As conscience is subject to the influence of education, Paul's conscience doubtless dictated to him that it was right to defend the doctrines in which he had been educated, and to oppose what he deemed opposite doctrines. He did so with uncommon zeal till new light burst into his mind. But as soon as he was convinced that the Jesus who had been crucified was the promised Messiah, his conscience dictated a change in his course—and the natural ardor of his soul was then

turned into a new channel. His zeal was still as great as before, but it was now directed by the wisdom which is from above, and not by party hatred or any cruel passion.

Whatever appears to conscience to be truth, she of course approves as right. I believe it to be impossible for her to do otherwise. Whenever she approves of error, it is because she mistakes it for truth. Such is her integrity, that she will always condemn what appears to her false in opinion, or sinful in temper or practice. In this way she proclaims her origin to have been divine; and she often evinces that she is illuminated by the Spirit of God.—She may be called not only God's Monitor, but God's Advocate in the soul. She pleads for what she thinks is pleasing to God; and often inflicts severe pain or remorse on those who disregard her admonitions, or transgress her requirements.

The consciences of well educated children teach them that it is right to honor father and mother. Of course, they receive for truth the religious doctrines which are inculcated on their minds in childhood. Hence the children of different countries and different sects become tenacious of different opinions. Till further enlightened, the conscience of each child will approve what he was taught to regard as divine truth. For either of them to act contrary to what he believes to be right would be morally wrong or sinful. Hence a respect is due to the consciences of those who have been educated in error—a degree of respect too, which I fear is seldom shown by Christians towards Pagans and Mahometans, and by Christians of different sects

towards each other. Moral integrity is ever to be respected; and this may exist and be evinced, by persons who are in great errors on religious subjects.

As to the religious opinions received in childhood, conscience can have little to do in regard to their reception, except by enforcing respect to parental authority, or the instructions of superiors. But after a person becomes adult, and capable of examining for himself, if new opinions are proposed for his reception, conscience must surely have something to do. If the opinions are opposite to those which have been imbibed by education, conscience will hesitate, and oppose their reception, until she shall be convinced or persuaded that they are according to truth. This is ever to be expected of persons of integrity of heart. Nor is this caution to be censured; on the contrary, it is to be commended. But as soon as the person becomes convinced that the proposed doctrines are true, then conscience will assuredly give her voice for their reception.

If the preceding remarks on conscience are correct, is it not a clear case that the doctrine of total sinfulness must be a mistake? If our nature is wholly sinful; how has it happened that God has such a faithful advocate and reprover in the breast of the transgressor? If, as the Westminster Assembly supposed, our whole nature became corrupt and sinful by the fall, it might have been expected that conscience in the unregenerate would always be found on the side of sin — would uniformly call evil good and good evil, and employ all the influence she possesses for the promotion of vice; that

instead of condemning the felon for his crimes, she would say to him "Well done good and faithful servant." Is not every remonstrance in the unregenerate against a sinful course, a declaration in favor of God, that he did not curse our race with a nature wholly sinful? And is it not enough to fill any reflecting mind with horror, to think what must have been our condition, and what must have been the character of God, had such been the fact?

NO. XIV.

Thoughts on Regeneration.

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit." John iii. 6.

These words were uttered by our Lord in his conversation with Nicodemus, to enforce the doctrine which he had just stated in the following words—"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." From the two passages in connexion it has been inferred, that all the posterity of Adam come into the world in a state of total sinfulness. Why else, it is asked, do they need to be born again? It seems not to have been duly considered that our Lord did not say "that what is born of the flesh is *sin*." What he said was of a different import from this. He indeed said, "That which is born of the flesh is *flesh*; and that which is born of the spirit is *spirit*." By these declara-

tions I understand him as teaching that there are two kinds of life, the one animal, the other spiritual; that in being born of the flesh, we have only what pertains to animal life, which is insufficient to prepare us for heaven; that, therefore, to qualify us for the service and enjoyment of God, "we must be born again," that we may possess spiritual life; and this is the effect of being born of the spirit.

Men, as born of the flesh, have various animal properties, which are neither sinful nor holy. For sin is a transgression of some law or rule of righteousness; and holiness or obedience consists in conformity to such a law. But a child neither violates nor obeys any moral precept by merely possessing the constitutional properties bestowed on him by his Maker. Besides, as these animal properties are the work of the Creator, we should forbear to denominate them sinful, unless we wish to represent him as the Creator of sin, in such a sense as to excuse the subject by whom these properties are possessed.

A desire of happiness or self-gratification, is among the properties of animal nature. To this desire all our animal appetites and propensities are subservient, when properly governed and directed. This common desire of happiness is by some writers denominated self-love, to distinguish it from that selfishness which is forbidden by the requirement, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

A desire of happiness, as well as an appetite for its mother's milk, may exist in a child prior to moral agency, and the former may be as innocent as the latter. But while it appears to be true, that our

animal properties, as born of the flesh, are neither holy nor sinful, they may nevertheless expose us to temptation, and render us very liable to sin. It was even so with our first parents; and those who are duly observing have found it to be so with themselves.

That children are born destitute of holiness, I readily admit. For they are born destitute of knowledge; and knowledge is as necessary to obedience as it is to transgression. Not only are children born destitute of holiness, but they are born with such animal appetites and propensities as greatly expose them to temptation, as soon as they become capable of moral agency. Hence they need moral or spiritual instruction by precept and example, and to be born of the spirit, that they may possess such spiritual life as qualifies the soul to subject the animal nature to the will of God, and to delight in obedience to the divine precepts. Spiritual life, or that life which is the effect of being born of the spirit, implies, as I conceive, some *knowledge* of right and wrong, and *love* to what is *right* and hatred or aversion to what is wrong. As soon as this life has existence in the mind, a desire to know more of truth and to obey it are natural consequences. Children are doubtless capable of being thus born of the spirit, as soon as they become moral beings; and whether such shall be the happy lot of any individual child or not, may depend on the instructions and examples by which his mind shall be influenced at that early age. If there be proper care taken to sow in his mind the seeds of truth and love, who will deny or doubt that God is

ever able and willing to give effect to the proper means of regeneration?

It was the opinion of Jeremy Taylor, an eminent bishop of the Church of England, that Adam, when placed in Paradise, had "supernatural grace given to him, which enabled him to please God, resist temptation, &c." What could the bishop mean by this more or less than that Adam was born of the spirit, or had spiritual life implanted in his soul, to enable him to know and to do the will of God? Nor do I see any thing unreasonable in the hypothesis. Adam was created with animal appetites by which he was exposed to temptation; and he could have no knowledge of duty but what was communicated to him by God. In addition to animal properties, he needed spiritual life, that obedience might become his delight. How could he obtain this light and life, but by being born of the spirit? Prior to his fall, he did not indeed need to be born again on account of possessing a sinful nature; but he might need it that he might possess a holy or obedient disposition.

Regeneration in Adam before his fall, or in a child at the commencement of moral agency, would in some respects be a different thing from the regeneration of an adult, habitual transgressor. In the former cases there would be a disposition produced to *avoid evil*, and to *learn to do well*. But in the adult transgressor, there must be a *breaking off from sin*—a *ceasing to do evil*, and not a mere *learning to do well*—a contrition for past offences, as well as watchfulness and desire to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly in time to come—a stony or hard

heart is to be taken away, as well as a tender and obedient heart to be formed—and vicious habits are to be broken off and laid aside, and virtuous habits formed in their stead. When a child is in such a state that we may say “of such is the kingdom of God,” we may feel assured, that it had the advantages of pious instruction and example. So when we see children of a contentious, disobedient disposition, hateful and hating one another, we may safely infer, that they have lived under an evil influence, or have been exposed to vicious instructions and examples.

The word regeneration seems more properly to mean *re-begotten* than *reborn*; and the Greek word used by John which is in the common version of the Bible so commonly translated “*born*,” is by Dr. Macknight translated “*begotten*” in all the following passages.

“If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that he that doeth righteousness is *begotten* of him.” 1 John, ii. 29.

“Whosoever has been *begotten* of God, doth not work sin.” 1 John, iii. 9.

“Every one that loveth, hath been *begotten* of God.” 1 John, iv. 7.

“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, hath been *begotten* of God; and every one that loveth the *begetter*, loveth him that is *begotten* of him.” 1 John, v. 1.

In all these and several other passages, regeneration is ascribed to God. But the same effect is also ascribed to divine truth or the word of God, as the *seed* which is sown; and it is also ascribed to

the ministers of the gospel, as the instruments employed to sow the seed. Hence in explaining the parable of the sower our Lord said, "The *seed* is the *word*." On the same principle Peter said to Christians—"Being born or begotten, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God that liveth and abideth forever." 1 Peter, i. 23. In the 3d verse of the same chapter, Peter represents God as having "begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The apostle James, speaking of God and the early Christians, says, "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of his creatures." James, i. 18. Instead of the phrase "begat he us," the improved version reads "regenerated us." The same idea is doubtless intended in both versions.

As evidence that regeneration is ascribed to the preachers of the word, let it be observed how Paul addressed his converts. "For though ye have ten thousand instructors, ye have not many *fathers*; for in Christ I have *begotten* you through the gospel." 1. Cor. iv. 15. On the same principle he addressed Philemon in the following manner:—"I beseech thee for my *son* Onesimus, whom I have *begotten* in my bonds." 10 v. All who were converted under his ministry he regarded as his spiritual children. On this principle he called Timothy and Titus his *sons* or *own sons in the faith*. Yet he was far from a disposition to rob God of his glory. "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God *gave the increase*." Such was his manner of speaking on this subject.

It will naturally be asked, what are these truths

which are the *seed* in the great work of regeneration? There are doubtless many truths adapted to this end. Those contained in the law, or commandments of the Lord, are of high importance: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." Ps. xix. 7, 8. By the commandments of the Lord we obtain much knowledge of his character, and of our own—of our duty, and our transgressions. For by the law is the knowledge of sin; of the sins to be avoided, to be put away and forsaken, and of those for which we need forgiveness. Hence as one of the great blessings of the new covenant and gospel dispensation, God thus foretold—"I will put my laws into their minds, and on their hearts will I write them." Accordingly we have in the sermon on the mount, the most perfect illustration of the law of Jehovah that ever was given; and at the close of this lucid exposition, our Savior, in the most solemn manner, assured his hearers that life or death awaited them, according to the manner in which they should treat his instructions.

As the precepts and prohibitions of God are a light to direct us in the path of life, so the doctrines taught by the Messiah are of vast importance, as reasons and motives for obedience. Men are moral beings, and it seems reasonable to suppose that their regeneration is effected by moral means—by such truths as are adapted to produce a moral influence on their minds. All that the Messiah taught relat-

ing to the sinful and perilous condition of our race, of the love of God in sending him as the light and Savior of the world—all he said, did, and suffered, to impress the minds of men with the worth of their souls—of the realities of a future life—of a judgment to come according to the deeds done in the body—and of the mercy of God, his readiness to pardon and save the returning sinner, and of the fearful retribution which awaits the impenitent—these are all reasons and motives to enforce the duty of repentance, and a cordial devotion of our hearts and all our powers to the service of the Lord.

As the work of regeneration is represented in the Bible, it is indeed of high importance to us all; but there is nothing in it more mysterious or miraculous, than in God's causing the wheat to spring up, grow, and ripen for the harvest, when faithfully sowed and attended to by the husbandman. In both cases the seed is of God's providing—in both he employs laborers to sow the seed—in both much is depending on the quality of the seed—on seasonable sowing—on the prudence and discretion of the sower—and in both the success or increase is of the Lord. His spirit or energy is absolutely essential in both cases to give effect to means. In both cases the laborers should feel and may properly say, that without God we can do nothing—our labor must be in vain, except the Lord give the increase.

Though regeneration is thus variously ascribed to the agency of God, to the truth or word, and to ministers of religion; yet the change in the mind and character of the subject is also as clearly as-

cribed to his own agency, his hearing, believing, receiving and obeying the truth—his repentance, humbling himself, forsaking the ways of sin, and turning to the Lord. When the incorruptible seed is received and cherished, it takes root, springs up, and brings forth fruit unto eternal life. In all this, the subject acts as a free agent, influenced by motives. He is as free and voluntary in this moral reformation, as Lot was in fleeing from Sodom, after the angel informed him that the city was about to be destroyed; or as men ever are, when, on hearing good news from a distant region, they sell their possessions and remove to the better country.

The views of regeneration which have been entertained by many persons as being a miraculous work, must probably, in some cases have had an unfavorable influence on their own minds, and on the minds of others. Ministers and parents, possessing these views, are very likely to impute their want of success to the sovereignty of God in withholding the influences of his spirit; while in truth they should impute it to their own want of discretion or fidelity in sowing the seed; or to the influence of their incorrect views on the minds of their people or their children. Under the influence of such opinions, how readily do people form the opinion that they can do nothing for themselves, and “must wait God’s time for conversion.” With such views, what is to be expected better than that the persons who possess them will go on in sin, looking for a miraculous influence to convert them?

That the conversion of a sinner from the error of his ways is really an event of vast importance, and one

in which the hand of God is to be gratefully acknowledged, cannot be denied. But the same may be said of the conception and birth of an infant, of recovery from sickness or insanity; and there is nothing more miraculous in one of the cases than in the other. In all the cases God gives effect to means of his own appointment; and so it is in granting success to exertions of the husbandman or obtaining a harvest of wheat. But what would be the consequence of teaching the ignorant husbandman that wheat cannot be produced without the miraculous agency of God, that God acts as a sovereign in giving or withholding, and as often gives success to the slothful as to the industrious; and that when God's time comes, we shall have a harvest whether we labor for it or not?

In several respects there has been a diversity of opinion, or at least of expression, in regard to regeneration. Some speak of it as an instantaneous work; others regard it as progressive, and a work which is not completed till the subject becomes perfect in holiness. The difference, however, in this case, seems to arise principally from a different use of words. Those who consider the work as instantaneous, seem to apply the word regeneration merely to the *commencement* of a spiritual life. They still hold to a progressive work of sanctification or reformation. On the other hand, those who say that regeneration is progressive, include in the word regeneration the whole progress of reformation or sanctification. Each party will doubtless admit, that there is a time when spiritual life begins in the heart; and that it is often a long time before the

persons arrive at the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. Why then should the parties contend and censure one another?

There are, however, differences of opinion of a more serious nature, relating to the proper evidences that a person has been born of God, or that spiritual life has commenced. Some rely much on a person's being able to relate a series of overwhelming agonies of mind on account of his sin and danger, and subsequent joys of an extraordinary nature. Others rely much on a person's being able to tell the time and place of his supposed conversion. Others again depend much on dreams, visions, or audible voices addressing the person in consoling language, or on the sudden recurrence to the mind of a comforting text of scripture. I have no doubt that instances of real conversion have been accompanied with one or another of these phenomena. Still I believe it to be a truth, that not one of them is mentioned in the scriptures as a proof of regeneration. Hence it appears to me unsafe for individuals to rely on such things in a case of such importance; and indiscreet in a minister to encourage such a reliance.

There are many persons of different sects who set up certain doctrines as a test of Christian character, alleging or pretending that the unregenerate are naturally opposed to these doctrines, while the regenerate embrace them with delight. Hence if a person objects to their creed, this is deemed evidence of an unconverted state; but if he appears delighted with the party test, this is regarded as evidence that he is born of God. On such tests of character, I would observe—

1. All these party creeds are the work of fallible men. They have not even the merit of being expressed in the language of scripture. Nay, they are *designedly* expressed in other than Bible language. This very circumstance renders their correctness questionable.

2. Different sects have different tests, and in some particulars they are not merely *different*, they are *opposite*. They may all be erroneous, but they cannot all be according to truth.

3. Many children and ignorant people give good evidence of piety, while they are wholly incompetent to judge of the correctness of party creeds.

4. Children generally grow up in a belief of the peculiar doctrines of the sect to which their parents happen to belong; and many notoriously immoral persons have been violent advocates for the creeds in which they were educated.

5. The apostle John says—“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, *is born of God.*” This happens to be the only doctrine in the New Testament, a belief of which is spoken as a proof of regeneration. In regard to this, the declaration of John is positive and strong. But is it not a fact, that this doctrine is in very low esteem with all the creed-making sects of the present age, compared with other doctrines of their own invention? This, in the days of the apostles, was the great evangelical and orthodox doctrine. But now a man would be in danger of being cast out as a heretic, and denied the Christian name, if he were to assert of this doctrine what John did—“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, *is born of God.*”

I am willing to admit that the *belief*, to be an evidence of regeneration, must be that cordial and practical belief which disposes a person to obey the precepts of the Messiah, and conform to his example. Such faith and obedience comprehends every thing that is mentioned in the gospel as evidence of regeneration. I may add that these sectarian doctrines which at this day divide Christians into parties, and a belief of which is made essential to the Christian character, or evidence of regeneration, are in no instance so represented in the gospel.

6. Our Lord was very explicit as to the proper evidence of a good heart and a Christian character; yet he omitted to mention any one of the popular evidences of this day, which I have enumerated. The following is a summary of what he taught in relation to this subject.

As to *faith* or *believing*, it may be observed that he pronounced Peter "blessed" on the ground of his faith, that Jesus was "the Messiah the son of the living God." But what he principally insisted on as evidence, was *obedience* to his precepts, as may appear from the following passages.

"He that hath my commandments and *keepeth* them, he it is that loveth me."

"Then are ye my friends, if ye *do* whatsoever I command you."

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

"Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy."

"Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God."

“Blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be called the children of God.” Matt. v. 7, 8, 9.

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you.” Matt. vi. 14.

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth* the will of my Father who is in heaven. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and *doeth* them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house upon a rock.” Matt. vii. 21, 24.

By these declarations, and others of similar import, we may learn what are the evidences of a regenerate state, from the lips of him who is ordained of God to be our Judge.

There is not, in my opinion, any safety in judging of the spiritual state of one person by what are called the religious experiences of another, any farther than those experiences imply the meek, benevolent, forbearing, and forgiving temper of Christ, and obedience to his precepts. “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof; but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the spirit.” Such is the account given by Christ of the operations of the spirit; and we have no evidence that the operations of the spirit are not as various in different persons and at different times, as are the operations of the wind in different places and different seasons of the year.” The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith or *faithfulness*, temperance.” It is by the fruit we are to know the tree. If the tree has been made good, we may expect such fruits from it

as the apostle has described; and where these are found, we have the proper evidence of regeneration. But without the fruits of love, our hope, if we have any, must be destitute of any solid basis, whatever may be our creed, or our experiences in other respects.

As the "good seed" by which men are regenerated may be early sown in the minds of children, the views which have now been given, may furnish powerful motives for parents to "bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." When parents shall understand the best methods of sowing, and shall be truly faithful to their offspring, we may expect that children, in great multitudes, will be seen growing up as disciples of the Lord Jesus. The success of parents in this delightful enterprise, may be in proportion as their duties shall be wisely and faithfully performed. In this, as in other cases, if men sow sparingly, they will reap sparingly; but if they sow bountifully, they will also reap bountifully. It is however of great importance that the seed be good and adapted to the soil. As milk is for babes and strong meat for men, it is unwise to attempt to feed the minds of children with doctrinal propositions which they do not and cannot understand. It is still worse to urge upon them mysterious and unintelligible doctrines, which have no place in the Bible.

The theory of regeneration which has been presented, may show us why the children of truly benevolent parents are so much more commonly virtuous, than the children of vicious and profligate parents; and also why some persons of very exem-

plary characters, have lived long in the dark as to their spiritual state.

There have indeed been melancholy instances, in which the children of parents, eminent for piety, have proved notorious for vice and profligacy. But I think no person of much knowledge and candor will deny, that the children of good people are much more commonly virtuous than the children of vicious and irreligious parents. This is to be accounted for on this ground, that good seed was early sown in their minds, or that they were trained up in the way they should go. The favorable results of religious education have been so common, that people evince surprise and disappointment when they learn that the son of eminently good parents has become vicious and abandoned in his practice. But in many instances these melancholy results may perhaps be traced to something disgusting and indiscreet on the part of the parent in sowing his seed; or to the influence of bad example in neighboring children.

It will probably not be denied, that many apparently good men live for a long time in darkness in regard to their own spiritual condition. It is highly probable that they were born of the spirit in childhood, so early that they have no recollection or very indistinct recollection of what then passed in their minds. The good seed might have been sown so early by parents or others, that they were incapable of forming proper estimates of their own exercises. They may perhaps recollect that they felt an abhorrence of vicious practices, which they witnessed in others; and that they had delight in doing what they thought to be their duty; but they were not then aware that these

were proper fruits of the spirit. Besides their minds may have been early imbued with false views of regeneration. By hearing, while young, adult professors relate their experiences, such as they regarded as evidence of their conversion, the young listeners might become impressed with the idea that *all* converted persons must have had similar exercises. Hence, as they could not in truth relate such exercises of their own, as they heard from the lips of others, they imagined that they must still be in the gall of bitterness—and this too, while they were conscious that to do good was their study and delight. Had they never heard of any other evidences of a regenerate state than such as were mentioned by Christ and his apostles, they might probably have enjoyed much comfort, and have been useful members of churches. It is, however, a difficult thing to eradicate from the minds of serious and conscientious persons, the false ideas of conversion which they imbibed early, by hearing the narratives of others, who in their esteem were eminent for piety. - It hence appears very important that good people of all denominations should obtain correct views of regeneration, and particularly of what are and what are not evidences of a regenerate state. This is important not merely as it respects themselves, but as it respects their own children, and other people who are exposed to be influenced by their narratives.

NO. XV.

Review of a Modern Substitute for a Supposed Sinful Nature.*

The prevalence of wickedness among mankind has been in all ages an occasion of grief to the pious and benevolent; and the occasion of much inquiry respecting its cause. Among Christians it has been a common opinion for many generations, that God, to manifest his displeasure on account of Adam's apostacy, doomed all his posterity to be born with a nature wholly sinful. Hence, to this sinful nature, with which they were cursed by God, all wicked actions have been ascribed. In later times, in New England, respectable writers, who were denominated Orthodox, discovered, or thought they discovered, that John was correct in saying, "*Sin* is the transgression of the law." On such ground it was very natural to infer, that the term *sinful* should not be applied to the *nature* which God gave us, and should only be used to express the *nature* of such *volitions* or *actions* as are contrary to the commandments of the Lord. It was, however, still believed by these very men to be a fact, that all the posterity of Adam become sinners by their first moral volitions, and also become totally sinful, having no other volitions of a moral nature but those of transgression. The minds of these thinking men were of course excited to inquire, what cause could

* This article was first published in the Christian Examiner.

be assigned for a fact so extraordinary and so universal as this, that the first moral volition of every child should be sinful, when it had been admitted that no child is born with a sinful nature? Dr. Hopkins and many of his disciples accounted for the fact, on the ground of a "divine constitution," which connected the first sin of Adam with the first moral act of each of his descendants. More recently the phrase, "by a divine constitution," has, if I mistake not, been pretty much laid aside, and other forms of speech have been adopted, which, I presume, are supposed not so directly to affirm or imply a positive divine agency for the production of an effect so dreadful.

Within a few years Dr. Taylor of New Haven, with his associates, including "The Christian Spectator," have done much to diminish the reputation of what had long been regarded as the Orthodox and Calvinistic views on this subject, and have brought on themselves a considerable share of clamor and reproach. But the "Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans," lately published by Professor Stuart of Andover, contains a more full examination and refutation of those views than I have seen in any other New England publication. He has done so well in exposing the absurdity of former hypotheses, that I cannot but regret that the one he advances as his own is not less liable to serious objections. To account for the supposed universal sinfulness of Adam's posterity, without the supposition that they are born with a nature wholly sinful, he has advanced the following hypothesis, which is several times expressed with some diversity of form:

“ I admit that all are born in such a state that it is now certain they will be sinners as soon as they are moral agents, and that they will never be holy until they are regenerated.” p. 240.

“ That they are in such circumstances that they will all sin as soon as they are capable of sinning, and never do any thing holy until they are regenerated.” p. 242.

“ All come into the world in such a state, as makes it certain that their appetites, which lead to sin, will prevail; and that they never will have any holiness, until they are born again.” p. 526.

The hypothesis of Dr. Taylor is expressed as follows:

“ A ground of certainty exists in the mind of each individual of our race, that the first and all subsequent acts of moral agency will uniformly be sinful, previous to regeneration.”

Such is the modern substitute for the ancient supposed sinful nature; and if the substitute can be supported by Scripture testimony, it may as fully account for all the depravity which exists among men, as the hypothesis of a propagated nature wholly sinful. It is, however, to be observed, that Mr. Stuart has not attempted to support his hypothesis by a course of argumentation. In his enumeration of the supposed evils or losses to which the offspring were subjected by his fall, he has introduced the hypothesis which I have quoted as one of those evils. It will be my aim to examine the subject with all the candor and respect due to the Professor, from one who formerly entertained a similar opinion, — and whose present dissent originated in a conviction that the doctrine is not taught in the

Bible; and cannot be reconciled to the more important doctrine, — “God is love.”

That there are passages of Scripture which, literally understood, would imply that all mankind are sinners; including infants and idiots, I shall not deny; and there are a few texts in which children are poetically or hyperbolically spoken of as going astray from their birth, or as speaking lies as soon as they are born. Such passages have often been collected and arranged to prove that children come into the world with a nature wholly sinful. But notwithstanding all such passages, Professor Stuart has boldly said, “All men pronounce infants to be *innocent*, until theory bids them to contradict this.”*

He has also shown that he is fully aware, that such passages were never intended to be understood in a strictly literal sense; and what he has said to invalidate their force, as used by Calvinists, is of equal cogency against applying them for the support of his own hypothesis. Indeed I have no belief that he would adduce such passages in support of his views, were he to attempt to support them by argument; for he appears to me to have adopted candid and judicious principles of interpretation generally.

In his remarks on Rom. v. 19, Mr. Stuart has the following passage:

“It seems to me impossible, without doing violence to the Scriptures, to deny that Adam’s first offence is here asserted to have a connexion with, an influence upon, the sin and condemnation of all his posterity. *But how is not said.* Let the reader remark this well. Paul neither asserts that Adam’s sin was propagated; nor that it was imputed to us without any act of our own; nor that it is ours

merely by the force of example. Nor does he say, that *hereditary* depravity is the ground and cause of all sin; nor that we are condemned without being *actual* sinners." pp. 539, 540.

On the same principle, and with the same truth I may add, — Nor did Paul say, "that all are born in such a state that it is now certain they will be sinners as soon as they are moral agents." . . . "Let the reader remark this well!" I have no disposition to deny, that the apostasy of our first parents was "connected with, and has an influence upon, the sin and condemnation of their posterity," in the same manner as the apostasy and dissipation of virtuous parents, at the present day, tend to the ruin of their offspring.

Perhaps Mr. Stuart is not quite correct in his remark, "*But how is not said.*" For in the very verse on which he was remarking, we read as follows, — "For *as* by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, *so* by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Is not this equivalent to saying, — We were made sinners by the disobedience of Adam, *as* we are made righteous by the obedience of Christ? I think it is.

So far, then, as men can know how they are made righteous by the obedience of Christ, they may know how they were made sinners by the disobedience of Adam. It is, I believe, by a moral influence in both cases, and not by supernatural means or agency. To me it is very clear, that we are not made righteous by having the obedience of Christ transmitted to us by "ordinary generation;" nor by having his obedience imputed to us as our

obedience; nor by being placed "in such circumstances" *as render it certain that we shall be obedient as soon as we are moral agents*. I therefore cannot believe that it is in a way analogous to either of these, that children are made sinners by the disobedience of Adam; and I think I may safely appeal to the conscience, even of Professor Stuart, whether Paul's contrast in relation to the "How," does not bear as hard against his hypothesis, as it does against either *imputed* or *propagated* sinfulness.

Mr. Stuart has more than once suggested, that there are some who assert that the posterity of Adam become sinners "merely by the force of his example." On this ground he asks, "How can we account for the sins of such of his posterity as never knew any thing of his example?" This question was to me a little surprising; for what intelligent man does not know, that *imitations* of a bad example may have influence on thousands who never saw the original. But, in truth, I know not to whom the Professor refers; for I am not aware that any class of men suppose, that we become sinners "merely by the force of example." It is surely not so with me. I believe that the posterity of Adam are born with such animal appetites and passions as exposed him to temptation and sin; but the danger is enhanced in proportion as they are exposed to the influence of evil examples and instructions. Is it then difficult to account for what we know of the wickedness of little children, who not only possess such animal properties as exposed Adam to sin, but are much exposed to the influence of pernicious instructions and examples?

No propensity in children is more observable than the propensity to *imitate*. This is an estimable property, if directed by good examples; but it exposes to danger when called into exercise by pernicious examples. I am, however, not aware that any valid evidence can be produced to prove, that little children in general are less disposed to imitate what is apparently amiable and good, than what is bad and hateful. But when I seriously consider to what extent children are commonly exposed to the influence of bad examples and instructions,—how little care is generally taken to preserve them from such influence, and how imperfectly the business of moral education has been attended to, or even understood; I am as much inclined to wonder that children are not generally worse than they are, as that they are so bad.

Few Christians will doubt that the example of Christ has done much to make many righteous; and that the example of Adam has done much to make many sinners. But example is not all. The example of Christ, however, includes his preaching, as well as other parts of his practice. His doctrines, his precepts, his promises, his threatenings, his example, and his sufferings, have all had a salutary influence to make many righteous. So there may have been much in the example of Adam, besides his first sin, to make many sinners,—even things of which we have no distinct knowledge.

Mr. Stuart has furnished me with one example which may be useful in illustrating this subject. While opposing Calvinistic views, he stated the following query:

“If a writer should say that millions in Europe have become, or been constituted profligates by Voltaire; would the meaning necessarily be, that his sin was put to their account? Certainly not. It would be enough to say, in order fully to explain and justify such an expression, that Voltaire had been an instrument, a means, or occasion of their profligacy.” p. 538.

Surely Professor Stuart will not say, that the influence of Voltaire placed the “millions” in “such circumstances” as rendered it certain that they would become “profligates” as soon as they become moral agents. Why then does he imagine that the first sin of Adam had such an effect in relation to his posterity? In reference to the language of Paul on this subject, may I not borrow the language of Mr. Stuart, — “It is enough to say, in order fully to explain and justify” those expressions, “that” Adam “was an instrument, a means, or occasion of their” sin? I am unable to see why such an explanation is not as pertinent for setting aside the hypothesis of Mr. Stuart, as that of Calvin or Edwards.

On the whole, and after much reflection and inquiry, I may truly express the belief, that there is far less of mystery or of supernatural or arbitrary arrangement implied in Paul’s comparison of Adam and the Messiah,* than has generally been supposed; and that the better we understand the scriptures, and the more carefully we observe the common effects of apostasy in parents, the less need we shall find for any of the shocking hypotheses by

* Rom. v. 14 – 19.

which writers have attempted to account for the fact, that "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners." And as little probably shall we need the hypothesis of vicarious punishment to explain "how" by the obedience of one many are made righteous.

There are, however, objections to the modern hypothesis which appear to me of a more serious nature than any thing which I have yet mentioned. These I shall now exhibit. Though I have not observed that either Mr. Stuart or Dr. Taylor has said that it is "by a divine constitution" that children are placed in "such circumstances" as render it certain that "they will all sin as soon as they are capable of sinning;" yet, if such be the fact, these "circumstances" must have had a designing cause; and the results thus produced are of a character so extraordinary, that no cause can be adequate but the infinite mind of Jehovah himself. No reflecting person can suppose that effects so uniform, so universal, and so perpetually occurring, could be the *natural effects* of a single volition of Adam to transgress; nor that his volition could cause such a change in the human constitution; as naturally to occasion each individual to become a sinner at the very moment he becomes a moral agent; and at that moment to pass from a state of perfect innocence, to a state of total sinfulness. If "such circumstances" do in fact exist, as render such a change in every child "certain," at such a particular period of his existence, there is not, it is believed, in all the works of creation or providence, any thing more evidential of immutable *purpose* and strong *desire*

on the part of God. But what must be the nature of a purpose or a desire, which has for its direct and immediate object, the *total sinfulness* of all the human race, to manifest God's displeasure on account of Adam's first transgression! Must it not be of the nature of revenge, or of doing evil that good may come? The arrangement of "such circumstances" as would render the supposed effect "certain," invariable, and as durable as the successive generations of men, must have been independent of the knowledge or the volition of Adam, and of all his descendants; and an arrangement for which they could not be responsible or blamable. Are we then to believe that God had such an invincible desire to see all the human race, for a time, totally depraved, that he caused a special or supernatural arrangement of circumstances to render the awful result certain and inevitable!

Another consideration which seems to me of great force against the hypothesis is this; if such an arrangement of circumstances has been established by our Maker, all pious efforts on the part of parents to preserve their children from becoming disobedient and vicious, must be useless. What, then, must be the feelings of reflecting parents, who believe this doctrine, and also believe, that "every sin deserves God's wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come!" Let this case be examined with care. A pious father and mother have a child born to-day, for which they feel tender affection and solicitude. They think of the new duties which will devolve on them as parents, should the life of the child and their own lives be prolonged

for years to come. They recollect the injunctions, — “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not:” “Bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;” and they feel disposed to pray for their child, and that God would assist them to be wise and faithful in the discharge of parental duties. But after having reflected, and sought divine direction for a while, suddenly their creed occurs to their minds, — that every child is placed in “such circumstances” as render it certain that he will sin as soon as he becomes a moral agent, — and from that time will be totally sinful even unto death, unless it should please a sovereign God to grant special influences of his spirit, and effect the work of regeneration. Of course, no prayers, no efforts, no care on their part, can be of any use to prevent the fearful result. Should the child live and advance like other children, he must soon be ripe for moral agency; then *sin he will*, for *such are the circumstances*, as to insure this result. Nay he will sin not only once, but become totally depraved, so as to have no other moral volitions but those of rebellion against his Maker. How trying, how appalling, how paralyzing must be the doctrine to the minds of these parents! At present, however, they regard their babe as innocent and lovely, one who would probably go directly to heaven, should it die before it becomes a moral agent. Must not love to the child lead them fervently to pray, that God would in mercy remove it by death, before the fatal day of moral agency shall arrive?

Besides, if God has told us by his word, that it is his purpose that all the posterity of Adam should

“sin as soon as they are capable of sinning,” then this uniform result is a part of his *revealed will*. If such is the fact, — or is believed so to be by parents, must it not be wicked in them to use any means with a desire to save their infant children from becoming transgressors? How then shall we reconcile the two supposed parts of God’s revealed will, — that which has made known his purpose, that every child of Adam shall be a sinner as soon as he is a moral agent, and that which forbids all sin, and requires parents to train up their children in the way they should go? And what is the character ascribed to God, when we teach that it is a part of his revealed will, that all Adam’s offspring should become sinners “as soon as they are capable of sinning?” The language adopted by Professor Stuart in relation to the Calvinistic hypothesis, appears to me applicable to his own. The following are his impressive remarks:

“Now can the human mind well conceive, that perfect justice would punish with everlasting and inevitable corruption and misery beings who are sinners only *putatively*, that is, in mere supposition, and not in fact? For myself I can only say, that all the elements of my moral nature set themselves spontaneously against such a representation as this. It is one of those cases which make it necessary for me to be made over again, and have new and different faculties, before I admit its truth.” p. 537.

The Professor indeed supposes something more than mere “*putative*” sin, as soon as the child becomes a moral agent; but prior to this he regards the child as “innocent.” “Now can the human mind well conceive that perfect justice would,” on

account of Adam's offence, doom the innumerable millions of his innocent offspring to "inevitable corruption," and place them all in "such circumstances" as render it "certain that they will be sinners as soon as they are moral agents, and that they will never be holy until they are regenerated!" If, on account of Adam's offence, such were the feelings and the purpose of God towards our race, why should it be thought improbable, that he cursed us all with a nature wholly inclined to sin, and that this is one of the "circumstances" by which it was rendered certain that every child will sin as soon as it is capable of sinning? I may add:

It is unquestionably the duty of Christians to be "fellow-workers" with God, in promoting his *revealed purposes*. If then it be a truth he has revealed to us, that it is his will that every child shall become a sinner as soon as he becomes a moral agent, why should not parents do more than merely to forbear the use of means to prevent their children from becoming disobedient, and enemies to God? Why should they not be "followers of God as dear children," and do what they can to place their children in "such circumstances" as will render it certain that their first moral actions will be sinful? But what good parent could adopt such a course? And what would be thought of a parent, if seen employed in using means to render it certain that his child shall have no obedient volitions till *after* he has become totally depraved? Would he not be deemed a monster in iniquity, grossly deluded, or fearfully insane? If so, ought we not to inquire very carefully into the grounds of our belief, before

we venture any more to ascribe such conduct to our heavenly Father?

Mr. Stuart will not pretend that the proposition which I have called his hypothesis, can be found in the Bible. It is *his* "philosophy of Scripture doctrine," or his inference from what he regards as Scripture premises. Nor will any well-informed Christian venture to assert, that the arrangement of "such circumstances," as his proposition implies, was a necessary or natural effect of Adam's apostasy. What is it then but an arrangement produced by supernatural agency, for the very purpose of insuring that every child shall be a sinner as soon as he is a moral being? But can *such* effects be the proper objects of supernatural agency?

If it is by supernatural agency that all Adam's offspring are brought into a sinful state, it may be very natural to suppose that their regeneration is effected by a similar agency. One passage in the Commentary has led me to suppose, that Mr. Stuart's hypothesis was an *inference* from his views of depravity and regeneration. The following is the passage to which I allude:

"Of course, we necessarily draw the inference, that men are born destitute of such a disposition to holiness as Adam had in his primitive state; and this from the fact that they never, before regeneration, do any thing which is truly good or holy, but always sin in all their actions of a moral nature. This makes a wide difference between their present natural state, and the original condition of Adam. And into this natural state they are born, as we have reason to conclude, in consequence of Adam's fall. Although the Apostle does not specificate the

particular point in which the fall injured all men, yet as he so often asserts the fact that it did injure them, it must be of course allowed that in some way or other the truth of this fact is developed. In what way then is this developed, if not in the manner stated — namely, by our being born into a state destitute of all disposition to holiness, and with passions and appetites, which, situated as we are, will certainly lead us to sin, and always lead us to sin, in all our actions of a moral nature?" p. 560.

That Adam's posterity have sustained injuries by his fall, I readily admit; but these may have all been the *natural effects* of his apostasy, and not the effects of God's anger, nor of any supernatural or extraordinary arrangement of "such circumstances" as were adapted to involve in "corruption and misery" the whole human race.

I shall also admit that in certain respects the condition of Adam's children at the commencement of moral agency, has been different from his, and less favorable; but whether they have been different in all the respects supposed by Mr. Stuart is questionable. As to animal "passions and appetites," I suppose that these were possessed by Adam before his fall, as well as by us, — and that they were to him occasions of temptations as they surely are to his offspring. In regard to the "holy disposition," which it has been supposed that Adam possessed in "his primitive state," I have several queries to propose.

Is it not highly probable that Adam was at first *innocent*, prior to his being *holy*? If so, he was in this respect in such a state as Mr. Stuart supposes children are, prior to being sinful. If the term

holiness expresses the nature of obedient volitions, had Adam any holiness but what consisted in obedience? Are not what we call *moral dispositions*, such qualities as are *acquired* by obedience or disobedience, — or in the same way that moral habits are acquired? Was not Adam's "disposition to holiness," the *effect*, — not the *cause* of obedient volitions, — as a *disposition* for gaming is acquired by practice? If the latter queries are to be answered in the affirmative, as I think they should be, there may not be so great a dissimilarity between the condition of Adam and infant children as Mr. Stuart imagined.

There are, however, some particulars in which a distinction should be recognised. I believe it is generally supposed, that Adam commenced his course, as a moral agent, an adult in stature and mental faculties; but his posterity commence their course with what may be called infant faculties, compared with those of an adult. If this comparison is correct, the advantage is truly on the side of Adam. Besides this, Adam had no parents, and of course no grand-parents, no uncles or aunts, no brothers or sisters, and no neighbors, by whose evil examples or instructions he was exposed to be led astray. How very different from this has been the condition of little children generally! When we take into view these facts, and also recollect that children commence moral agency with such animal passions and appetites as probably led Adam astray when adult, it seems to me that we have enough fully to account for all that is *known* of the early transgressions of little children, without either the

revolting hypothesis of a propagated sinful nature, or a supernatural arrangement of circumstances to render it certain that all will sin as soon as they become moral agents; enough indeed to render it very probable, that they will generally transgress very early.

If any of my brethren shall still think, that in addition to the natural circumstances which I have named, God was disposed to express his displeasure on account of Adam's sin, by a supernatural arrangement of circumstances, to render early transgression and total depravity *more* certain, — it is for them to reconcile this supposed conduct to the spirit of benignity and forgiveness, which the Messiah ascribed to our heavenly Father.

Those who shall read the passage in the "Commentary" last quoted, may be convinced, that Professor Stuart inferred his hypothesis from his views of depravity and regeneration. I am aware that it has been a common opinion, that regeneration would be unnecessary, if mankind were not totally depraved. This opinion will, I think, be found incorrect, when the work of regeneration shall be better understood. So far as regeneration is the work of God, it is, I believe, that work by which he produces in men *spiritual life*, or the spirit of obedience. The work, if I mistake not, is effected by sowing the "good seed" of divine truth in the hearts of men, and causing it to spring up, grow, and bear fruit. Such a work, I suppose, was necessary to Adam in a state of innocency, in order to his becoming spiritually alive, or truly obedient to God. The same is necessary to every human

being, and perhaps was so to angels. I may now add, that I am unacquainted with any passage of Scripture which forbids the belief, that many children, religiously educated, have been regenerated, prior to being guilty of any transgression. But if regeneration or spiritual life should commence thus early, the child may still be liable to sin, as is the case with adult converts, and as was the case with Adam and Eve. The meek, humble, kind and obedient temper, which is often seen in little children, appears to me far better evidence of early regeneration than has ever yet been produced in favor of universal and total depravity. Though many professedly believe the doctrine of universal and total sinfulness, in regard to little children, yet I may boldly ask, What good man ever *practically* conformed to this belief. Does not common sense forbid the parent to accuse his children of transgression in *all they say* and *all they do*? In hundreds of instances little children give better evidence of a humble and obedient temper, than is generally given by professors of religion; and in how many instances might Christ exhibit the little child as an example to professedly religious parents, as he once did for an example to contending apostles!

When we see in little children the spirit of kindness, humility and obedience, with care to avoid vice, on what principle can we tell them that they sin in all they do? If we do this, is it not clear that we substitute some theological dogma of our own, for the rule given by Christ, — “*By their fruits ye shall know them.*” Had this rule been duly observed in regard to children, many very young

would have been deemed not only "innocent" but virtuous. When we see in children amiable dispositions and actions, we have reason to hope that they have been "born of God;" and the care of parents and teachers should be, to encourage and comfort such children in the way of well-doing, — forbearing to bewilder their minds by teaching them that all their moral actions are sinful and offensive to God. If children *aim* to do right, and do that which they *think* is right, how pernicious must be the effect of trying to make them believe, that all they do is from a wicked heart, — a heart full of enmity to God! I have not a doubt that such teaching has done vast injury to children, as well as to their parents. How much more commendable would it be for parents and teachers to treat little children of amiable dispositions, as the Saviour did, believing with him, that "of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Parents who believe that all children "sin as soon as they are capable of sinning," and that they have no other moral volitions but those which are sinful, are continually exposed to self-contradiction. They cannot but be pleased with what is amiable in the dispositions and conduct of their children; — hence, in one hour they will be saying, perhaps, "you are a *good child*, — you have *done very well*;" the next, they may be heard preaching according to their creed, that all children sin as soon as they are moral agents, and continue to sin in all they say and do, till God regenerates them by his special influence. How can little children, or any body else, reconcile such conduct or such language?

The passage last quoted from the "Commentary," seems to imply, that Mr. Stuart himself does not regard his hypothesis as unquestionably true. He says, "Although the Apostle does not specificate the particular point in which the fall injured all men; yet as he so often asserts that it did injure them, it must be of course allowed that in some way this is developed." He next asks, "In what way then is this developed, if not in the manner stated?"

If Paul did not "specificate," why should we? and can it be safe for us to "specificate" by an hypothesis in favor of the universal and total sinfulness of mankind, which suggests the horrid idea that it is even so with their Maker! What *father*, not totally depraved, could even *wish* to avenge the first offence of a son, by causing all the posterity of that child to become totally disobedient, as soon as they are moral agents?

Should it be asked, How then did the fall injure all men, as the Apostle "so often asserts"? In answer, I would inquire, In what connexion, and by what forms of speech; did the Apostle assert the fact? All he said of this kind is found in a contrast by which he attempted to show, that the evils occasioned to our race by the disobedience of Adam, are even overbalanced by the favors which result from the obedience of Christ. The language which Paul used in summing up the contrasted evils and benefits, is, by Professor Stuart, thus translated: "For as by the disobedience of one man, the many were constituted sinners; so by the obedience of one the many will be constituted righteous."

If from the first part of the verse we may infer

that all little children become sinners, "as soon as they are capable of sinning," why not from the latter part infer, that, since the resurrection of Christ, all children become righteous as soon as they are moral agents? I am induced to think that Dr. Macknight's paraphrase of this verse approaches nearer to its correct interpretation: "As/through the disobedience of one man all were made *liable* to sin and punishment, — even so, through the obedience of one man, all have been, are, or shall be, made *capable* of righteousness and eternal life."

I might here more fully express my thoughts on Paul's contrast; and also show, that our liability to sin does not result from God's displeasure on account of Adam's apostasy, but from his kindness to us notwithstanding that offence; that our animal senses, appetites, propensities and passions, by which we are so constantly exposed to temptation, were not implanted in our natures, to render us liable to sin; but as expressions of kindness, adapted to promote our usefulness and comfort; that our sin does not consist in possessing these properties, but in the indulgence of them in a forbidden manner. But in another work on "Man's Liability to Sin," which may be published at a future time, these topics, and many others, have been illustrated in so ample a manner that I indulge a hope that the work will afford some light on an important subject, — and obviate some difficulties which have long perplexed the minds of many good people.

I am not aware of any other doctrines which are supported by any sect of Christians, that now seem to me to have such an injurious bearing on the

character of God, as that which represents him as so revengeful on account of Adam's sin, as to cause all his posterity to be born with a nature wholly sinful, or to be placed in "such circumstances" as render it certain that they will become totally sinful, prior to having any obedient volitions,—and that which represents him as so unforgiving that he could not pardon the sins even of the penitent, except on the ground of vicarious punishment. If, while on the borders of the grave, I may be allowed to do something to counteract the influence of these doctrines, I deem it a duty so to do; and particularly so, as in the earlier part of my life I did something in their favor. I have used the words *revengeful* and *unforgiving*, because I think that no better feelings can account for such conduct as these doctrines ascribe to God.

As in this review I have expressed my dissent from several doctrines which I once thought to be correct, and which others still regard, not only as correct, but important, I wish it to be understood, that my dissent is not from any doctrine as expressed in the gospel; but from "the philosophy of Scripture doctrines," by which others have attempted to account for facts, or to explain Scripture language, in accordance with some human system. I believe that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin;" and that, "as by the disobedience of one man many were made or constituted sinners, so by the obedience of one" many have been, and "will be, made righteous." At the same time I have dissented from every human hypothesis which imputes our liability to sin to God's anger, on ac-

count of the sin of Adam. I also believe in the necessity of regeneration, not merely on the ground of human sinfulness, but because "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and destitute of spiritual life, — and, because without spiritual life, no one is fit for the kingdom of God. I believe, too, that regeneration implies the operations of God's spirit, — the same spirit or energy by which he created the world, and by which he produces *vegetable life*, *animal life*, and *spiritual life*, — by which also he gives us every good and perfect gift. Whoever is the instrument in sowing or in watering, it is "God who giveth the increase," both in the natural and the moral world.

Discussions on theological questions of great importance, between brethren who happen to be of different opinions, may be of public utility, if conducted in the spirit of meekness, kindness, mutual affection, and becoming respect for each other's characters. On this principle I have endeavored to write this review. If in any particular I have violated this principle, the greater disadvantage resulting from the failure must be on my own part. I think that He who knows my heart is my witness, that it has been no part of my aim to injure the moral character of Professor Stuart. Though I have aimed to invalidate the reputation of his hypothesis, I have no belief that he viewed it in the light that I have done, nor that he was at all aware of its being of a pernicious tendency. In writing, I express what I believe to be true; and I doubt not that it is so with him. Few men, perhaps, have had more ample evidence of their own liability to

err, than has fallen to my share. The effect of this experience on myself has been to remove from my mind every disposition to impute to wickedness of heart, what I regard as errors in the theological opinions of my Christian brethren.

APPENDIX.

Professor Stuart is aware of the importance which Calvinistic writers have attached to a belief in their views of original sin, and of man's sinfulness by nature. He appears to be also aware, that his dissent from their views will expose him to suspicion and reproach. Before closing his remarks, however, he exhibits a brief contrast between his views and those he has attempted to refute; and makes a forcible appeal, as to which "presents the most cogent reasons for penitence and humility,—which inculcates the deepest sense of our need of a Saviour,"—and which "best agrees with proper views of God's justice and our own accountability."

I am unwilling to suspect Mr. Stuart of any intentional unfairness in forming his contrast, as the ground of his appeal; but it so happens, that he has presented the darkest features of the Calvinistic theory, against the best features of his own,—wholly omitting the appalling hypothesis to which I have objected. He states the contrast in the following hypothetical form:

On the part of Professor Stuart:—

"If man, fallen as he is, has in his fallen state all the faculties necessary to do good, and has a

moral sense, conscience, judgment, reason; if 'not being yet born he has not done any good or evil,'—Rom. ix. 11; and he sins altogether of his own free will and choice whenever he does sin; then it is indeed true that he is guilty of death; then is punishment not only threatened but altogether *deserved*." p. 547.

On the part of President Edwards:—

"But supposing, on the other hand, that men are born with a positively evil disposition, which is itself sin, and incurs eternal death antecedent to all choice and action; supposing them to have, as President Edwards asserts, a propensity [to sin] that is *invincible*, or a tendency which really amounts to a fixed, constant and unfailing *necessity*; and supposing that this propensity, thus implanted in their natures and antecedent to all choice and action, is the basis or ground of all subsequent sins; then indeed they may need redemption; they are truly in a ruinous state; they are indeed objects of our pity and of overwhelming misfortune; but where is the aggravated measure of their voluntary guilt, which the Bible charges upon them as agents altogether free?" p. 547.

Let it now be supposed that President Edwards should revisit New England to answer Professor Stuart's appeal; may he not with propriety address to him a note of the following import?—

J. E. to M. S.

"My friend: In your late Commentary you have spoken of me in terms sufficiently respectful, and some of my ancient opinions you have ably refuted. But in forming your appeal, as to the comparative tendency of your theory and mine, you have failed

to do me justice. From your contrast many may be led to think, that I failed to teach that 'man in his fallen state has all the faculties necessary to do good'; or, 'that he sins altogether of his own free will and choice.' But I wrote some bright things of this kind. Why did you not set some of these against the bright things of your own theory? I wrote many years ago; and many things which I then believed to be true will not bear examination in the light which now prevails in New England. If you thought it best to exhibit the dark spots in my theory, why did you not set against these the appalling spots in your own? In a future day some ideas which you have written may appear as odious to others, as any of mine now do to you. Could a nature wholly sinful, or an invincible propensity to sin, be more fatal to little children, than being 'born in such a state,' or placed 'in such circumstances' as render it certain that they will sin as soon as they are moral agents, — and only sin till they shall be regenerated? You object to my theory because it supposes, that a propensity to sin was implanted in the natures of children 'antecedent to all choice and action, and is made the basis of all subsequent sins.' You indeed suppose that children are born innocent, and continue so till they become moral agents; but you also suppose that God takes seasonable care, that they never shall have one obedient volition till they shall have become totally sinful. This is done, as you suppose, by placing them in 'such circumstances' that it is certain they will sin 'as soon as they are capable of sinning,' and that they will sin in all their moral volitions till they are regenerated.

Now what had these innocent children done, that they should be all placed in circumstances so perilous and fatal? And do not you account for their 'subsequent sins' on the ground of 'such circumstances,' as fully as I accounted for them by an invincible propensity to sin, or 'a tendency which amounts to a fixed, constant and unfailing necessity?' In what respect then is your hypothesis less exceptionable than mine, either in relation to the condition of children, or the character of God? In regard to your claims on the question of free agency, of what use are faculties for free agency, if God has designedly placed the agents in 'such circumstances' as render it certain that they will not have any holy or obedient volitions till after they shall have served an apprenticeship to Satan in the school of total depravity? Can it be consistent with perfect benevolence or forgiving love in God, to place all the posterity of Adam in such circumstances as a mark of his displeasure against the first offence of the human race?

"The evils, natural and moral, which commonly fall to the lot of the children of ungodly and profligate parents, are *natural effects* of vicious examples and instructions; and as opposite effects are generally seen to result when children are wisely and faithfully trained up in the way they should go, we can see a good end, as the object of these arrangements in both cases. The sad results in the former case, are a solemn admonition to all parents to shun the ways of disobedience, lest they bring evil on their offspring. The happy results on the other hand, are adapted to encourage all parents to adopt

and pursue the paths of wisdom and virtue, that it may be well with their children, and children's children. This divine policy, in both cases, is adapted to enlist the natural affections of parents for their children on the side of piety and virtue. But what *good end* can be perceived in such a constitution, or such an arrangement of circumstances, as is embraced in your hypothesis? It supposes every child of Adam condemned to a state of 'inevitable corruption,' and total sinfulness, for no offence of its own, and by such circumstances as are completely adapted to subvert all the pious efforts of godly parents to save their children from the paths of disobedience. It even tells godly parents, that however faithful, humble and prayerful they may be, their infant children are just as sure to become totally sinful, as the children of the most impious, profligate and abandoned parents in the world!

"But, my friend, by careful inquiry and observation, you may find, that both the word and the providence of God are adapted to encourage parents to 'bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.' Any hypothesis which denies this, even implicitly, must be erroneous, whether mine or yours, or by whatever number of good men it may have been adopted. You have very justly represented some of my former hypotheses as absurd, and of bad tendency. I shall not be surprised, if within fifty years, a large portion of the clergy in New England, shall be agreed in classing your hypothesis with mine, as erroneous and of pernicious tendency. Some may probably say, that it

exhibits God as a most vindictive Being, disposed to revenge on innocent children the offence of the first man; a Being too who devised a supernatural and *permanent establishment*, for the purpose of suddenly transforming innocent little children into beings totally sinful. When this state of things shall occur, you may know how to sympathize with me and thousands of others, who have found that some doctrines, which were once thought essential, are even reproachful to God, and injurious to man.

“As I wish you to be seasonably aware of the danger of your hypothesis, I will state a simile for your consideration.

“ELIHU was a child remarkable for his intelligence, and for an amiable and obedient disposition. At length, however, he yielded to temptation, and exposed himself to punishment by disobeying a parental command. His conscience reproached him severely; and he was filled with grief, anxiety, and alarm. He soon made known his condition to a pious neighbor, in whom he had entire confidence. He stated all the circumstances of the case so far as they were known to him; and expressed his astonishment that he should be found guilty of such an act. In the course of conversation the neighbor assured Elihu, that his own father had planned all the circumstances by which he had been induced to disobey, to make it certain that he would transgress; and that his father had told him that such was the *fact*. If Elihu believed these declarations, what must have been his views of his father's character and conduct? Would he not think that he had now

some excuse for his offence; and that it would be unreasonable in his father to punish him for an offence, which resulted from his own arrangements, to render disobedience certain? And, should the case be brought before an impartial court, would not the father be deemed the more blamable of the two?

“What then, my friend, will be the natural effect of teaching mankind, that their heavenly Father, to express his displeasure on account of Adam’s sin, caused all his posterity to be placed in such circumstances as make it certain that they will all sin and become totally sinful, as soon as they become moral agents? A little reflection may lead you to doubt whether your hypothesis is a *revealed truth*. If God had intelligence to form such a plan as your scheme asserts, and a *heart* to execute it, is it not reasonable to believe that regard for his own character would have disposed him to keep the affair a profound secret in his own breast?

“My doctrine of a sinful nature, or an invincible propensity to sin, you regard as placing mankind in a state of ‘overwhelming misfortune.’ But is being born with such a nature or such a propensity a greater ‘misfortune’ to children than, after being for a time innocent, to be placed in such circumstances as insure that they will sin and become totally sinful as soon as they are moral agents? But, sir, is it not a dreadful doctrine, — whether it be mine or yours, which precludes all encouragement for pious parents to use means to save their children from total depravity? If holy Adam could — without a previous sinful nature, or an arrange-

ment of such circumstances as would render his fall certain, why should we resort to such hypotheses to account for the common and early transgressions of little children? I have become convinced that what I once called a sinful nature consists in such lusts of the flesh, such animal senses, appetites, propensities and passions as exposed Adam and Eve to transgress. These properties are not in themselves sinful; nor were they implanted to render it certain that children will sin as soon as they are moral agents. They are *favors*, bestowed by God to render us capable of enjoyment and usefulness; but they are like other favors which expose mankind to temptation. When abused or unlawfully indulged, they are occasions of sin.

“ Intelligent and reflecting men of the present age are in the habit of considering the different circumstances under which different children are born and educated, when called to estimate the nature of their actions, or the degree of criminality attached to such actions as appear odious or reprehensible. If, in consequence of the vices or the imprudence of his parents, a child is born blind, diseased, deformed, imperfect in his intellects, or the subject of any natural defect, allowance is made for such omissions or defects in his conduct as are supposed to result from misfortune, or the wickedness of his parents. So if by the ignorance or the wickedness of his parents, a child is denied the advantages of religious instruction, and trained up in ignorance of God, and under the influence of vicious examples, so as to be made to believe that revenge is noble and praiseworthy, it will readily be said that nothing *good* can be expected of him.

If at seven years of age he should kill a brother, a sister, or one of his playmates, to revenge some wrong, when the affair is brought before a court, inquiry will be made in regard to the character of his parents, and the disadvantages under which the child had been placed; and great allowance will be made on the ground of those unfortunate circumstances. If it shall appear that his parents were capable of teaching the child the path of duty, but did not, a great share of the blame will be ascribed to them. From such facts you may readily infer, that your hypothesis, as well as mine, is very far from being adapted to impress the minds of children or of men with correct views of their sinfulness, or of the real nature of sin; that it tends to furnish an excuse for early transgression and depravity. Though I once had an unfavorable opinion of such Christians as denied or doubted the total sinfulness of little children, as a consequence of Adam's sin, I am now convinced that the more the minds of children are impressed with a belief that this doctrine is true, the more confused their ideas will be as to what sin is, —the more they will see themselves as objects of pity, and the subjects of 'overwhelming misfortune'; the more too they will excuse their real transgressions, and impute the blame of them either to Adam or to God. If you wish men or children to feel what an evil and bitter thing it is to sin against God, forbear to impute their liability to sin to the displeasure of God on account of Adam's transgression; and do what you can to make them feel that their sin consists in an ungrateful abuse of the kindness and manifold favors of the Lord."

NO. XVI.

Dr. Spring's Theory of Native Depravity.

A Dissertation on Native Depravity, by the Rev. Gardiner Spring has recently been presented to me for examination. It is of a date more recent than Professor Stuart's Commentary on the Epistle to Romans; and it appears to have been written for the purpose of disproving the hypothesis of Professor Stuart and Dr. Taylor, relating to the time when infants begin to sin. He seems to agree with them as to the nature of sin, and as to the faculties which are necessary to constitute a person capable of sinning. On these particulars he takes fair and scriptural ground, as may appear from the following passage.

"The Bible affixes a definite idea to *sin*, and a well defined character to the term *sinner*. In one place it declares, *All unrighteousness is sin*. In another it says, "*To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin*. And in another it says, *sin is a transgression of law*. It is obvious that sin is predicable only of an intelligent being, and that in such a being it consists in the transgression of law. It bears relation to some standard. *Where there is no law, there is no transgression*. *Sin is not imputed where there is no law.*" p. 6.

On first observing this paragraph, I was wholly at a loss what ground Dr. Spring had adopted in opposition to Professor Stuart. Soon, however, I found that he had advanced the hypothesis that infants are born moral agents, or with all the know-

ledge and faculties which are essential to obedience and disobedience;—that in fact each child as soon as it is born “KNOWETH TO DO GOOD, AND DOETH IT NOT,” and hence is a sinner. Such is the fact if I have not misunderstood him; and whether I have misunderstood or not the reader may judge from such passages as the following:

“Our illustration of the doctrine of Native Depravity, therefore, will not, we think, be misunderstood. We mean by it that every child of Adam is a *sinner*, and from the moment he becomes a child of Adam. He may not be a sinner in the sight of men; but he is so in the sight of God. He sins not in deed nor in word, but in thought.” p. 10.

“So far as we have any thing to do with the soul in moral science, and especially in the present discussion, it consists of *natural faculties* and *moral dispositions*. Its natural faculties are Perception, Reason, Conscience and Memory. The moral dispositions are those internal operations or emotions of mind, which can be compared with a rule of action, commanding what is right and prohibiting what is wrong.” p. 11. “Now these rational and moral properties are essential *to the soul's existence*. They belong to the infant of a day old, as really as to the man of eighty.” p. 12. “Every infant that has attained to maturity enough to have a soul, has such a soul as this. It is a soul which perceives, reasons, remembers, chooses, and has the faculty of judging of its own moral dispositions. Conscience belongs to the soul as well as perception and reason.”—“The youngest human soul possesses this, as the immediate gift of the Creator.” pp. 12, 13.—“We are ready to grant that if the soul of an infant has no conscience, no moral sense, he has no accountability, and we might add, that he has no soul. But if infants have a conscience and

a moral sense, which we think is implied in the existence of the soul, then they may have enough to sin." p. 35.

According to the common acceptation of language, an infant is as truly "a child of Adam" several months prior to his birth, as after it is born; nor do I see any more difficulty in his being a moral agent prior to his birth, than immediately subsequent. But in one part of the dissertation Dr. Spring has limited his meaning so as to exclude the idea of sin prior to birth. I shall therefore examine his hypotheses according to his own explanation.

In favor of his hypothesis, Dr. S. has said many things which the advocates for "Native Depravity" will probably regard as forcible; but all he has said depends on the correctness of the hypothesis, that children are born with such knowledge and such matured faculties as render them capable of moral agency. If this hypothesis is incorrect, his superstructure must fall, sooner or later, according to the progress of light.

That there are several passages of scripture, which, literally understood, are in favor of his hypothesis, I shall not deny. He, however, was aware that an objection would occur to a literal interpretation of such texts. For after having marshalled the texts on which he relied, he says—"No doubt it will be said that some of the preceding passages are to be received in a figurative, and not in a literal sense"—and then frankly adds—"and this is true. So is a vast proportion of the passages which describe the sinful character of adults highly figurative, as will at once be remembered by every

attentive reader of the Bible." p. 32. This is a concession of great importance in this inquiry. For it is on the supposed literal meaning of such passages that hypotheses are advanced, and urged with great confidence, which seem to contradict the common sense of mankind, and many well known facts. It is therefore very proper to inquire what facts or reasons exist in favor of a figurative interpretation of all such passages of scripture as seem to be in favor of the doctrine, that infants are moral agents from the moment of their birth. Some such facts and reasons I shall state, and such only as appear to me of considerable weight.

1. "The infant of a day old" exhibits not the least evidence that he possesses the knowledge necessary to moral agency; — on the contrary, all the appearances in the child, which relate to this subject, are in opposition to the hypothesis. We indeed regard the child at its birth as a being who may hereafter be a *moral agent*; and also as a being who may hereafter be able to *walk* and to *speak*; but at present he appears perfectly incapable of either. Indeed I suspect that Dr. Spring himself would be as much surprised to see such a child give evidence that he "*knoweth to do good*," as he would to see it spring from its mother's arms and walk about the house, — or to hear it converse in the language of its parents in a rational manner.

2. So far as we are able to judge by experience or observation, children at two years of age have no knowledge, but what they have acquired by the aid of their senses and the teachings of parents or others, since they were born. After they have

become able to talk, and to understand much of what is said to them, it does not appear that they have one idea of moral right or wrong which they brought into the world with them — not one besides those which have been inculcated by others.

3. Analogy seems to me clearly to be against the idea that the infant soul at its first existence, or the child at its birth, is possessed of the knowledge and faculties which are requisite for moral agency. Vegetables and animals first exist in an embryo state, from which they gradually advance to a state of maturity, their properties and powers unfolding and gradually becoming more and more mature, till their true character becomes obvious. Nor have we any evidence that the human soul or the human child is an exception from this apparently general rule of divine operation. When the child is born it exhibits no evidence that its mental faculties or organs are in a state of greater maturity than those which pertain to the body. In both respects it appears an *infant*, in a state of great imbecility and immaturity, as perfectly ignorant as it is helpless. Like many other animals it sucks by instinct, but with less appearance of knowledge than colts and calves.

4. There is much evidence of a great diversity as to the age at which different children become moral agents. How remarkable is the difference which is often perceived in different children of the same age! While one appears to have a clear perception of moral right and wrong in several distinct cases, another will appear as destitute of any such perceptions as a kitten or a puppy. In some instances

this diversity may result from a diversity of mental faculties; in others from a diversity of education.

5. So dependent are infants on the instructions they receive after they are born, for all they know of moral right or wrong, that children of different countries, and even of the same country, possess opposite ideas in many particulars relating to duty. Each will regard as God whatever he has been taught so to regard, whether it be Jehovah, an animal, or a senseless statue, — each will regard his own worship as right, and the worship of the other as wrong. So the child of a savage may regard *revenge* as a *duty*; while the Christian child, duly educated, will regard it as an odious vice.

6. There is abundant evidence that the first perceptions of children are very imperfect, indistinct and incorrect. It is so in regard to natural objects; and perhaps still more so respecting things of a moral nature. What parents regard as the first indications of conscience in their children, may possess nothing more of a moral nature than the appearances of guilt or shame in the dog, when he finds himself detected in doing mischief, or doing something for which he had been previously chastised. The dog had learned from experience what was offensive to his master; so the child may learn what is offensive to his parents, before he has any clear perception of moral right or wrong.

7. Much more knowledge is requisite to moral agency than it seems reasonable to suppose a child to possess at its birth. One, two, or three ideas cannot be a competent stock for this purpose. Voluntary disobedience to a divine law, as such,

naturally implies some ideas of the precept violated — of what it requires and what it forbids; and some idea of a Lawgiver by whom the precept was given. To love God with all the heart, and our neighbor as ourselves, is the sum of the divine precepts. To love or to hate any being or object, implies some ideas of the being or object loved or hated. Now what does the new born infant know of God, or of any human being, even its mother, to render it capable of loving or hating? How is it possible that it should violate conscience in respect to a command of which it has not the least perception?

8. Disobedience of a moral precept implies not only some knowledge of the precept, and of the lawgiver, but of something which operates as a temptation or a motive to do wrong. If a child sins, he must be influenced by some *motive* so to do; or what morality can there be in the action? But what temptation or what motive was ever presented to the mind of an infant immediately after its birth, which could have any influence to induce it to transgress? When human beings transgress the divine laws, they are generally induced so to do, to gratify some animal or fleshly appetite or propensity; but what appetite or propensity of the infant can be gratified by acts of disobedience? and how can he know what will or will not gratify his animal appetites?

9. The remarkable account of Caspar Hauser may furnish facts in opposition to the hypothesis of Dr. Spring. Caspar appears to have been a child of good mental faculties, capable of receiving instruction. But such had been his confinement in a

dungeon, and his seclusion from society and ordinary sources of information, that, at sixteen years of age, he had no idea of a God, or any moral precept or duty. Nor did he know that any human being, or any animal, existed, except himself and his keeper. He understood no human language; and was so profoundly ignorant, that he supposed the wooden horses, which were allowed him for companions, were living beings like himself. Let it then be asked, which of the ten commandments was it possible for Caspar knowingly to violate, while in that state of ignorance? Could he prefer other Gods to Jehovah? Could he bow down to graven images, or to any other object, in disobedience to the second commandment? Could he be guilty of taking God's name in vain, or of profaning the Sabbath? Could he be guilty of disobeying father or mother, while he had no idea of any such beings? Could he have been guilty of murder, adultery, theft, or bearing false witness? How could he covet what he did not know had any existence? Could he with any propriety be classed with him who "knoweth to do good, and doeth it not?" And if Caspar was thus deficient at the age of sixteen, what must be the condition of an infant "the moment it becomes a child of Adam!" What precept of the Old Testament or the New is it possible for such an infant to transgress? We might as rationally imagine a clock or a watch to possess a conscience, as such an infant.

10. Had we evidence that the hypothesis of Dr. Spring is true, we should have much reason to believe that children at their birth are miraculously

endowed with the requisites to moral agency, for the very purpose that they may sin as soon as they become the children of Adam. For there is no mode of communicating or acquiring ideas, known to our race, by which it would be possible for infants at that age to become possessed of such precocious knowledge and mental faculties as to render them capable of moral agency. Besides, it may be observed, that after children evince faculties for moral agency, they have no recollection of having been capable of knowing to do good as soon as they were born — no remorse for having sinned at that early period; — and, in their present advanced state, they have no knowledge of right and wrong, excepting in those cases in which they have been instructed at a later period than the time of their birth. Conscience now has no advantage from any supposed precocious light possessed prior to birth, or immediately subsequent. It is occupied only about things in which it has been more recently instructed; and it goes no farther in “accusing or excusing” than according to the instructions which it has received. If then the doctrine in question be true, in what possible way can we account for the facts it asserts, but by a miraculous agency? And are we to imagine that an *innocent infant* is an object so odious to God, that rather than behold it, he is at the expense of a miracle as frequently as a child is born, to render it a sinner or capable of sinning? If it be a truth that God possesses such a fixed aversion to infant innocency, as to be at such expense to make them all sinners, what must be his own character? Can it be altogether lovely?

While speaking of the opinion of those who suppose that the soul at its first existence "is not capable of moral exercise in any degree, and requires growth and enlargement to become capable," Dr. Spring has the following inquiry:—

"How then is this spiritual, immortal existence to become capable of moral exercises? Mind," he says, "does not grow like a vegetable. It cannot be enlarged by granulation. *It expands and becomes vigorous only by exercise.* But if the hypothesis on which we are animadverting be true, it is impossible for it ever to become more expanded or vigorous. It is not capable of exercise in any degree. It has nothing to begin with. I ask then again, how is this deficiency to be supplied." p. 16.

I am not an anatomist, in regard either to the soul or the body. I shall not attempt to give any account of the essence of the soul, or the manner in which its faculties are formed. I may, however, mention some things which seem to me probable, relating to the developement of these faculties,—much more probable than that the soul at its first existence possesses a fund of knowledge, without having had any time or opportunity to acquire it.

From what we know of the manner in which ideas are acquired by adults and by little children,—and from what we know of the gradual advances of children in acquiring knowledge,—it seems to me safe to infer, that the farther we trace back this progress, the fewer ideas the child will be found to have possessed, till we at length come to a period when it had not one idea. This is the state to which Dr. Spring refers when he says,—"It has nothing to begin with." He supposes the child

must have a stock of ideas "to begin with," or it could never commence its march. How, then, I would ask, does the child obtain the stock "to begin with?"

But let it be supposed, that the mind or soul is organized for the purpose of receiving impressions or ideas through the medium of the bodily senses. Let it also be supposed, that when the child is born the faculty of Perception is in a state of forwardness corresponding with the infant state of the body,—and that the body is furnished with infant senses, which are to be the mediums of light to the soul. The eye perhaps is the *window* through which the soul receives its first ideas of natural objects, external to itself. After acquiring a number of such ideas, Memory comes forward to retain the ideas acquired. Thus the soul may advance in its acquisition of ideas, and in the developement of its faculties, until at length it becomes capable of reflection, and of receiving some idea of a moral nature,—perhaps at first but a single idea of moral right or wrong, and that too very imperfect.

The four "natural faculties," mentioned by Dr. Spring as necessary to moral agency, I should arrange in the following order. Perception, Memory, Reason, Conscience. This seems to me to be the order in which these faculties are developed. Perception, aided by the senses, gradually furnishes the soul with various ideas of natural objects. Memory is then needed to retain these ideas for further use. Then Reason is wanted, to compare, assort, and draw inferences. Conscience at last arrives, as God's vicegerent and advocate, in directing to a

good use of the stock in hand, and dictating as to what is right or wrong, duty or sin.

Such a gradual developement of the several faculties seems to me to correspond with what is observable in little children; and far more probable than that the soul possesses at the first moment of its existence the knowledge and the faculties necessary to moral agency—or to “know to do good, and do it not.” In reference to this hypothesis of Dr. S. it may surely be asked, whence comes this stock of knowledge, this fund of ideas, prior to any opportunity to acquire them by any mode known to mankind?

It will be readily perceived that my aim has been to show, that a child at its birth has not the knowledge and the faculties requisite to moral agency; and, of course, that “some time must elapse between its creation and its moral character; and therefore that it cannot literally *commence* its existence as a sinner.” But in reference to such reasoning or such a conclusion, Dr. Spring observes—“We are constrained to say that it is a mere metaphysical quibble.” He then goes on to say—“As well might it be said there is *some conceivable time* between the creation of matter and its essential properties, as to say there is some conceivable time between the creation of mind and its moral character. The sun, for example, is the source of light and heat; and at the instant of its creation it shines and warms.” p. 19.

I freely submit my reasoning on this subject to the common sense of my Christian brethren. If I have exhibited no evidence that infants are not moral

agents as soon as they are born, let the whole be denominated *metaphysical quibbling*.

The reasoning of Dr. Spring assumes for a fact, that all which belongs to a capacity for moral agency is essential to the existence of the soul; and that moral agency is the immediate consequence of the soul's existence, as light and heat are the immediate consequence of the existence of the sun. But can he imagine that the soul of a child at its birth is as really in a state of maturity, as the sun was at its creation? Created beings, which are long in arriving to a state of maturity, first exist in an embryo and very imperfect state. We do not suppose it to have been thus with the sun. The man who was once a feeble new born infant, is now not merely a *moral agent*, but an agent who can *talk*, and *read*, and *write*. Are we hence to infer that he was born capable of talking, and reading, and writing! Shall we plead that if he could not at his first existence do these things "*in any degree*," he would have had "*nothing to begin with*," and must have been forever incapable of such agency?

Making moral agency or a capacity for moral agency essential to the soul's existence, is to me a new hypothesis; and it has given rise to such queries as the following: — Does Dr. Spring believe that idiots have no souls, because they are at present incapable of moral agency? Or that a man's soul ceases to exist, when by fits, by disease, or by an accident, his mental faculties are deranged, or their regular operation suspended? Is a man soulless when for a time he is *dead drunk*? Does the

soul of the laboring man cease to exist when he is in a *sound sleep*? Can it be said of a person in either of the situations which have been named, that he "knoweth to do good, but doeth it not?" If not, and yet the soul exists, what evidence have we that a capacity for moral agency is essential to the existence of the soul? or that an infant is capable of moral agency as soon as it is born?

Dr. Spring seems unwilling to have it supposed that his creed implies that "God is the author of sin." But does it not imply or rather assert that God is the author of a *sinning infant* — an infant *formed for sinning* at the very first moment of its existence, — and as truly so, as the sun is formed for shining, or a clock formed for keeping time? He says — "We mean that every child of Adam is a *sinner*, and from the moment he is a child of Adam;" and that "it is as natural for them to sin, as it is for the sting of a serpent to be poisonous." Who, I would ask, rendered it so natural for the child to sin? who infused into his constitution the moral poison?

The Doctor indeed says, p. 75, "There is not a principle in this discussion but is intended to recognise the fact, that infants make themselves sinners, as well as adults." By this I suppose he means, that the *sin* or *sinful act* is in the infant, and not in God, as the poison is in the serpent's sting, and not in its Maker. But let the Doctor explain how it is possible for the infant to "know to do good and do it not" the first moment of its existence, not having had the least opportunity to acquire a single idea in any mode known to our race. If

he cannot, it may appear to others that what he imputes to God in making *infant sinners* is not less reproachful than to say, that he is "the author of sin." If it is wrong to say, that "he tempteth any man," can it be right to say, that he forms infants so perfectly fitted for sinning, that they sin as soon as they exist, and as naturally as the sun shines?

It may be well to attend to the reason assigned by Dr. S. for the conduct which he ascribes to God. While speaking of Adam's first sin the Doctor says — "Our minds need not here be perplexed with systems and theories if we admit the *great fact*, that for his apostasy a righteous God determined to bring all his posterity into the world sinners." p. 19.

We should distinctly notice the *offence* for which the dreadful curse was brought on infants — not for any wrong they had done, but "for Adam's apostasy!" Yes, for this Dr. S. supposes a "righteous God determined to bring all his posterity into the world sinners." Yet the "righteous God" has taught us, distinctly by Ezekiel, that he does not act on such a principle as to punish the son for the sin of his father; and he expressly forbade the Israelites to act on this principle. In the gospel his Son has taught us that God is a kind, forbearing, and forgiving Father. Are we then, notwithstanding such facts, to allow ourselves to believe, that this merciful Father has for nearly six thousand years been continually *cursing infants* for Adam's sin? What a contrast this to the declaration of John — "GOD IS LOVE." Could LOVE act such a part as to bring all infants into the world sinners,

under the wrath and curse of God for the first sin of the first man? I cannot believe such a doctrine, and I am confident that no such doctrine is taught in the Bible.

It may probably be said by Dr. Spring that God brings infants into the world sinners, not *merely* because Adam sinned, but that he may have opportunity to glorify himself by saving them on the ground of vicarious punishment and vicarious righteousness. Must we then also believe, that God does evil that good may come, or seeks to overcome evil with evil?

What worse principles or motives were ever adopted by men than such a philosophy of scripture doctrine ascribes to God? Under the Mosaic dispensation God used the following language — “O Israel, THOU *hast destroyed thyself*; but in ME is thy *help*.” But what is his language under the gospel dispensation, if Dr. Spring’s views are correct? Must it not be of the following import? — “O ye children of Adam, Jews and Gentiles, *I have destroyed you all*” for Adam’s apostasy, “and that I may show the greatness of my wisdom and love, by saving some of you on the ground of what my Son has done and suffered for you, — and this too without the least respect to any repentance or obedience on your part! As I *curse many* for the disobedience of Adam; so I *save many* for the obedience of my beloved Son?” Can this be “the glorious gospel of the blessed God?”

Reflecting and unprejudiced men regard *constitutional* defects of body or of mind, as calamities, not crimes; but if Dr. Spring’s hypothesis is correct,

“ Native Depravity ” is as obviously *constitutional* as *native blindness* when a child is born subject to that calamity.

I might say much on the awful bearing which the hypothesis of Dr. Spring has on the character of God. But much has been said in a preceding review of the Modern Substitute for a Sinful Nature, and this need not be repeated. The hypothesis of Dr. Spring really appears to me far more repugnant to common sense than that of Professor Stuart; and surely its bearing on the moral character of God is not less shocking to my understanding.

It is much to be lamented when a Christian minister is so unmindful of his own liability to err, or so deficient in that love which worketh no ill to its neighbor, as to feel disposed to reproach brethren who happen to dissent from his creed. Who would have anticipated that Dr. S. would allow himself to utter reproachful insinuations against men so respectable as Professor Stuart, Dr. Taylor, and Professor Fitch, — and even urge a separation from men of their opinions? Yet such appears to have been the feelings and the policy of Dr. Spring; and these feelings towards such men have excited in my mind such queries as the following;—

Do not men who zealously contend for hypotheses which exhibit God as a vindictive Being very naturally become assimilated to the character which they ascribe to their Maker? If it is believed that “ for Adam’s apostasy ” God brings all infants into the world sinners, can a man habitually contemplate on this hypothesis with pleasure, without serious injury to his own mind and character? Will he not be

likely to cherish in his own bosom such a spirit of resentment towards men who offend him, as his hypothesis obviously ascribes to God? May we not on such ground account for the fact that men who cherish such dreadful hypotheses, as essential doctrines of the gospel, are often remarkable for an unkind and resentful temper towards brethren who dissent from their views? How unmindful are such men of the fact, that they are as liable to be in error as their dissenting brethren!

One solemn admonition of our Saviour is this—
“Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” This admonition, as I understand it, has a primary reference to the common retributions of providence in the present state. Those therefore who have been judged and censured by Dr. Spring, may do well to inquire whether this is not a measure which they have too often meted out to men as upright as themselves. Dr. Spring too may yet live to have occasion to say—the measure I meted to others, is now measured to me again. He may then know by experience that it is not a light thing to have his integrity and Christian character assailed or called in question, on account of his honest opinions. “Who art thou that judgest thy brother?” This is an expostulation too little regarded at the present day, but as applicable now as it was when first committed to writing by Paul.

Probably no other thing has been a greater obstacle to the progress of light and truth among Christians, than the antichristian spirit which has

been indulged against inquiring ministers, whose researches after truth have led them to dissent from some popular hypotheses of the country in which they happened to reside. The abusive treatment which one such man may have received will probably deter hundreds from a faithful examination. The insinuations of Dr. Spring against his dissenting orthodox brethren may be the means of greatly impairing their usefulness, by fixing deep and lasting prejudices in the minds of multitudes of their fellow citizens. There is not, in my opinion, any species of robbery more injurious, or more deserving of general detestation, than that of robbing or attempting to rob useful ministers of their characters as Christians, or as good men. I indeed dissent in opinion, not only from Dr. Spring, but from the Rev. Professors against whom he has written. But among all my errors and transgressions I hope there is not one so offensive to God, as it would be for me to try to destroy the moral characters of these men, on account of their possessing opinions which I deem erroneous. All men are very liable to err; but perhaps none more so than the self-sufficient, who "trust in themselves that they are righteous and despise others." Such men could confidently say, even of the Messiah himself—"We know that this man is a sinner."

Review of the Progress of Opinion.

It is useful for Christians frequently to reflect on the progress of light, that they may be aware of human fallibility, and not be too confident of the correctness of their present opinions. The Catechisms of the Westminster Assembly of Divines expressed what was called orthodoxy in New England for more than one hundred and fifty years from its first settlement by emigrants from Great Britain. Probably hundreds of aged people are now living, who can well remember when it was regarded as evidence of an unconverted state for a minister or layman to deny or question what is said in the Shorter Catechism respecting "original sin" and "the corruption of our whole nature." It is not fifty years since those who were then called Hopkinsians were reproached as Arminians for asserting that *Christ died for all*, and that sinners are under no inability to obey the gospel, excepting their unwillingness, or the opposition of their hearts to God and their duty. But at the present time the orthodoxy of New England embraces each of these ideas. The distinction between natural and moral inability, which formerly was regarded as a heterodox Hopkinsian peculiarity, is now perhaps adopted by nearly all the clergy of New England who claim to be regarded as orthodox, in the current acceptation of the term.

It is, however, to be observed, that those who made the distinction I have named, and who maintained that sinners have all the natural ability which

is necessary to obedience, still believed and taught, that the opposition of the sinner's heart is so great and so entire, as to render his natural ability wholly unavailing, and the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit indispensable. In speaking of this respectable portion of the New England clergy, Dr. Woods, in his "Letters to Young Ministers," has very justly said— "They maintain the sinner's natural ability for the single purpose of representing him as a fit subject of law, and wholly without excuse in his sins. They never mention it as what can avail in the least degree to the renovation of their hearts." As proof of the correctness of this statement Dr. Woods quotes the following passage from Dr. Smalley. "Even better natural abilities than sinners possess would not be of the least service to them. And the reason of this is as obvious as the fact is certain: viz. because whatever strength any one has, he always lays it out according to his own heart, and not contrary to it. Consequently, all the strength of men and angels, yea even omnipotence itself, if the sinner had the direction of it, would not make him good."

In favor of the distinction now in view, Dr. Smalley was one of the most eminent advocates. His sermons on the subject had extensive influence. In later times some diversity of opinion has appeared among Trinitarian ministers, relating to this and some other questions. At this, however, I cannot be surprised. Inquiring men will not remain stationary in all their opinions. Honest inquiry must naturally result in some increase of knowledge, and some change of opinions. Besides, I cannot doubt

that many good men have felt a difficulty in boldly asserting the sinner's ability to repent, while in their own opinion, omnipotent aid, not yet received, was necessary to their compliance with the required duty. Of course, reflecting men must have wished to find out some way in which the difficulty might be consistently avoided.

In the *Christian Spectator*, and some other publications, language has been adopted which has given some alarm. Perhaps no publication, however, excited more feeling than a sermon delivered by the Rev. Mr. Finney in Boston, which was reported and published by the Rev. Mr. Rand. The sermon was founded on the command "Make you a new heart." Ezek. xviii. 31. After describing the change required, among other remarks and inferences we have the following:—

"It is apparent that the change now described, effected by the simple volition of the sinner, through the influence of motives, is a *sufficient* change, all the change the Bible requires. It is all that is necessary to make the sinner a Christian."

"Every impenitent sinner is infinitely guilty for not making himself a new heart:—for not going the whole length in performing the work himself."

"This view illustrates the nature of the sinner's dependence on the spirit of God. The only necessity for his aid or influence lies wholly in the sinner's *pertinacious obstinacy*."

"The spirit uses means in producing conversion. It does not come and take right hold of the heart, and perform an operation upon it; but he presents motives by means of the truth; he persuades, and the sinner yields to persuasion."

“If you are expecting any other agency than that which accompanies the means, you will wait in vain.”

I do not regard all these remarks as either prudent or correct. I have quoted them for the purpose of showing the progress of opinion; and also to show that some thinking men feel it to be important, so to preach as not to leave the minds of sinners impressed with the idea, that, notwithstanding all that God has yet done for them, they are really the subjects of inability to obey his commands. I have read very few orthodox sermons in which this difficulty was avoided more clearly than in the one by Mr. Finney.

That my meaning may be more obvious, I will quote a passage from the Review of Mr. Rand's “Trial of the New Divinity,” supposed to have been written by a friend of Mr. Finney. The Reviewer frankly admits that he should have been “better pleased if the preacher had somewhere *stated formally and distinctly*, that notwithstanding the perfect ability and obligation of men to make themselves new hearts, not one of them ever has done it, or ever will do it, without the special and efficacious influence of the Holy Ghost.” p. 6.

In my opinion, it was by forbearing to make this formal statement that Mr. F. succeeded so well, and avoided the difficulty so commonly involved in sermons on this subject. If, in addition to what he did say, Mr. F. had made the formal statement which has been so common, it would have been equivalent to saying — “Notwithstanding all I have said of your ‘perfect ability’ to repent, yet I am

aware of the fact, and you must bear it in mind, that all your ability will be unavailing and useless in regard to obeying the gospel, unless God shall make a special display of the influence of his spirit."

When men are *properly* represented as dependent on God for ability to obey the gospel, no inability is implied, any more than when they are represented as dependent on God for ability *to speak, to think, or even to breathe*. In each case every human being is absolutely dependent on God. He cannot, therefore, be more dependent in one of the cases than he is in the others. So far as God *gives ability*, the idea of *inability* is excluded, but *dependence* is implied.

I ought perhaps here to state that the Reviewer of Mr. Rand's "Trial of the New Divinity," assured his readers that Mr. Finney is a believer in the doctrine that "*special*" influences of the spirit are necessary to the obedience of the sinner. I had a suspicion that such was the case prior to seeing what was said by the Reviewer, though the sermon, as reported, gave no evidence of the fact.

I shall now proceed to the examination of a sermon of more recent date, and one which I suppose was reported by the author himself, and not by one hostile to his views.

Dr. Beecher's Sermon.

So recently as July, 1832, a sermon was delivered in the Chapel of the Theological Seminary at Andover, on "Dependence and Free Agency," by the Rev. Lyman Beecher, D. D. It appears to have been the desire and the aim of the preacher to prove, that sinners have a complete ability to do all that God requires of them; and that this ability is clearly consistent with the doctrine that special influences of the Spirit are necessary in regeneration. An impartial and friendly review of some things contained in the sermon may possibly occasion further light on the subject.

In support of the doctrine, that men have "the capacity of choice and action commensurate with the divine requirement," the doctor has reasoned with force; and he has exploded, as abominable, the idea that God requires of men "natural impossibilities." But I cannot say that he has been successful in his attempt to show that his two hypotheses are consistent with each other. This failure, however, I am disposed to ascribe to the nature of the subject, and not to the want of talents in the writer. He has been very bold and abundant in asserting that sinners have "entire ability to obey the gospel." Let then such assertions be compared with the following representations of the sinner's condition.

"The mainspring of the soul for holy action is gone, and divine influence is the only substitute." p. 8. By divine influence is unquestionably here meant "special influences of the Spirit," for such

is the language more commonly used in the sermon.

In page 30, speaking of the sinner who has become so alienated and fully set on evil as to baffle the regular influence of the law and the gospel," Dr. B. says, "This creates an obstacle to the reclaiming of the mind, vast and momentous; and furnishes occasion probably for the greatest display of omnipotence ever to be witnessed by the universe." p. 30.

In regard to the first of these quotations I would ask, can it be true that the sinner has a complete capacity to obey while the mainspring for holy action is gone," and the "only substitute" is withheld? And is it not remarkable that Dr. B. should assert that sinners have a "complete capacity" to obey, while they are regarded by him as deficient as a watch without a mainspring?

In view of the second passage I may ask, is it not bordering on insult to tell the sinner that he has an "entire ability to obey the gospel," while in the preacher's own opinion the state of the sinner is such as to furnish occasion probably for "the greatest display of omnipotence ever to be witnessed by the universe"? If the "obstacle" is really so "vast and momentous" that nothing short of a special display of omnipotence can remove it, the question may be fairly stated: Has the sinner a "complete capacity" to remove that obstacle? If not, how has he an "entire ability" to obey? And what impression do such representations leave on the mind of the sinner but that of *absolute inability to repent*?

In reply to these queries it may be said, that there is no "obstacle in the way of the sinner's obedience,

except the entire opposition of his will to his duty. The question then comes to this: Has the sinner a "complete capacity" to change his own will, and thus remove the obstacle? If God has already given him this complete capacity, why does he need *special* influence? If he has not this capacity, why does the preacher so confidently affirm that he has?

In a "complete capacity to obey the gospel" the following items seem to be indispensable: mental faculties for free-agency — some knowledge of gospel precepts and of moral right and wrong — and such aids of the divine spirit as are necessary to render obedience practicable. Men are begotten or born of the *word* as well as of the *spirit*. Let it then be admitted that some knowledge of gospel truths is necessary to gospel obedience; it hence follows, that the same knowledge is necessary to a capacity to obey. Of course, those who have not the necessary knowledge, have not a "complete capacity" for obedience, and are not required to obey. On the same principle, so far as the influences of the divine spirit are necessary to obedience, they are necessary to a complete capacity to obey; and no one can be reasonably required to obey the gospel who is denied the necessary aid.

We may also observe, that if there be an essential difference between the common influences or aids of the spirit and those which are called special, or supernatural, and if the common influences are insufficient to enable the sinner to obey, and the special influences are sufficient; then the capacity of the sinner must be incomplete so long as special influences are withheld.

I have already observed that Dr. B. has said much against the hypothesis that God requires "natural impossibilities." I would now ask, does God require *moral impossibilities*? And is it not in fact a *natural impossibility* for any being to do that which is to him *morally impossible*? We may say truly that the sinner's defect is in his will, and of a moral nature; but if it amounts to an "obstacle" which omnipotence alone can remove, it must surely be a natural as well as a moral impossibility for any one to effect its removal who is not omnipotent.

Dr. B. has stated and attempted to answer several objections. In reply to the first objection he says,

"If the dependence of the sinner upon the special influence of the spirit for ability to obey the gospel, were occasioned by such a constitution of mind as renders obedience a natural impossibility, for want of adequate powers, or knowledge, or motives, then it would be impossible to reconcile such dependence with accountability; and it might truly be said, they never have been and never will be reconciled."
p. 9.

It is here admitted that the sinner is dependent on "the *special* influence of the spirit for *ability* to obey the gospel." Let the remarks then be applied to the case of the impenitent sinner from whom "special influences" are as yet withheld. Is it not a clear case that he has not yet an "entire ability to obey"? If such special influences are indispensable to obedience — if "the mainspring of the soul for holy action is gone," and "the only substitute" is withheld, with what consistency can it be said, that he has in that state a "complete capacity" to repent?

Let it not be imagined that I deny the complete capacity of the sinner to perform all that God requires of him. For I suppose that God ever grants such aids of his spirit as are necessary to present duty. I object to Dr. B's. statements, because he asserts the complete capacity of the sinner to obey, while at the same time he believes the sinner has not such influences of the spirit as are indispensable to his obedience.

Man's "entire ability to obey" and the necessity of the special influences of the spirit are both asserted by the doctor for the purpose of representing the sinner in the highest degree criminal. But does not the sinner appear more criminal, and God more just and amiable, on the hypothesis that *all the necessary aid is given*, in proportion to the duties now required, than on the hypothesis that God at present withholds aid which he knows to be indispensable to present duty?

By further examination I have found that I had not till now fully understood the ground on which Dr. B. asserts the "entire ability" of the sinner to obey, while he still believes in the necessity of special influences of the spirit to enable him to repent. The following passage I had not duly observed:

"The influence of the spirit belongs wholly to the remedial system. Whereas, ability commensurate with requirement is the equitable and everlasting foundation of God's moral government." p. 19.

When the Doctor says, "The influence of the spirit belongs *wholly* to the remedial system," I suppose his meaning to be this, that were it not for

the sinfulness of mankind, they would have no need of the influence of the spirit to enable them to do their duty, or that none but sinners need such aid. This I believe to be a great mistake. It is my opinion that every created intelligence is dependent on the influence or aid of the divine spirit, for all his ability to obey; that such is the fact not merely in regard to impenitent sinners, but in regard to the most humble saints on earth, or even in heaven; and as really so with angels as with men. It may in truth be said by all persons of each of these classes, — “We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.” — That is, of God’s spirit. For it is by his spirit that he “worketh in us to will and to do.”

If I understand the passage which I have just quoted from the sermon, it is the opinion of Dr. Beecher, that men are not dependent on the aid or influence of the spirit for what he calls their complete capacity to obey,” and that they possess this capacity independently of the spirit. I readily admit that “the influence of the spirit belongs to the remedial system” — though not “*wholly*” or “*only*” to that system; but surely it does not hence follow, that men have “ability commensurate with requirement,” without the aid of the spirit. I suppose the “remedial system,” to be that under which all divine favors are conferred on sinful men. The gospel surely belongs to the “remedial system.” But may we hence infer, that a man’s capacity for gospel obedience is complete without the aid or influence of gospel instructions and gospel motives? If

not, why should we reason in this manner in respect to the influence of the spirit. As the spirit and the gospel both belong to the remedial system, so the influence or aid of both is implied in an "entire ability" for gospel obedience. If either of them is denied the capacity is incomplete,

In the course of his reasoning Dr. B. has said, "Obligation is expressly graduated according to what a man hath; and not according to what he hath not, — much of him to whom much is given, and little of him to whom little is given." p. 17.

It is very obvious that there can be no necessity of special influences of the spirit to enable the sinner to obey the gospel, if without that influence he has an "entire ability" to remove the "obstacle" in the way of obedience, and to do all that God requires. It will readily be admitted, that in the capacities of men there are great diversities. Of the several ingredients which constitute a capacity to obey, some have more, others less, and some have not enough to render them proper subjects of moral precepts. They of course are excused on the principle that the requirement is "according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not." Let it then be supposed that such is the state of every impenitent sinner, that special influences of the divine spirit are essential to his becoming a penitent. I will now state a case to test the principle.

A and B are supposed to be impenitent sinners, of equally good talents, and equal in their knowledge of the scriptures. To day Dr. B. in his preaching, exhorts these persons to repent and obey the

gospel. After sermon, he enters upon a private conversation with these two men, and becomes satisfied that A is *now favored* with the needed special influences, and that B is still denied any share of that aid. Dr. Beecher has here an opportunity to apply the great principle of equity. "Obligation is expressly graduated according to what a man hath and not according to what he hath not." A "*hath*" what Dr. Beecher believes to be the indispensable aid — without which no sinner ever did or ever will repent. B "*hath not*" that aid; the favor is denied him for the present — perhaps forever. If then Dr. B's. views are correct, is it not a clear case that *more* is required of A than of B? *Immediate repentance* is very justly required of A; but can the same be justly required of B to whom the necessary aid has been denied? Can Dr. B. or any other believer in his theory, conscientiously deny that *more* is justly required of A than of B? And is it not obvious that on the hypothesis to which I object, there is a real *defect* in the capacity of B as to obeying the gospel? I may also ask, would not B in the case supposed, appear much more criminal than he does, were it believed that he had received all the influence or aid of the spirit which was necessary to render his ability to obey complete? If so, then the doctrine that special influences of the spirit are necessary to repentance, has a tendency to blind the minds of men as to the degree of their criminality, and to furnish sinners with an excuse for their delay of repentance.

That men are constantly dependent on God for aid, which is always granted in proportion to the

duties required, is a very encouraging doctrine; but can this be said of the doctrine which teaches, that sinners are dependent on God for such aid to do their duty as has hitherto been withheld from them, and may never be given?

It is indeed a truth that the sinner's regeneration, or his recovery from a state of impenitency, is ascribed to God, or to the influences of his spirit; but never, I believe, to *special* or *supernatural* influences. It seems not to have been duly considered how extensively, in the scriptures, effects produced by human agency and means of divine appointment are ascribed to God. "*Every house* is builded by some man; but he who built *all things* is God." It is God who gives the increase to those who plant and sow. Men are as really dependent on God for all their ability and all their success in the management of their secular concerns, as in working out their own salvation. Our Saviour has taught us to eye the hand of our heavenly Father even in the falling of the sparrow; and he expressly said to Pilate, "Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above." Are we to suppose that such effects are to be ascribed to special influences of the spirit, because they are so emphatically ascribed to God? Surely not. Besides, it is in allusion to natural generation or the natural birth that men are represented as "begotten" or "born of God"—of "the spirit of God," and of "the word of God." But the things alluded to are not supposed to be produced by *special* or *supernatural* agency. While, therefore, we gratefully acknowledge the power and kindness of God,

when his word has a saving effect on the minds of men, we should not forget that "every good gift, and every perfect gift," is from the Father of lights. To that God who created the world, and who said "Let there be light and there was light," we are alike indebted for natural life, and spiritual life — for natural food, and spiritual food — for every favor pertaining to the life that now is, and that which is to come.

Though Dr. B. in the course of his sermon has boldly and strongly represented that it would be injustice and tyranny in God to require more of men than he has given them a capacity to do; yet in his answer to the seventh objection he says, "If the doctrine of free agency and natural ability to obey the gospel does set aside the necessity of a special divine influence in regeneration, it cannot be true." It hence appears that notwithstanding all the confidence with which he had asserted man's entire ability to do what God requires, the Doctor wishes it to be understood, that he is still more confident that "special divine influences" are necessary in regeneration.

I would here just observe how small a change of language on the part of Dr. B. would be necessary to make it accord with what I believe to be true. I fully believe, as I have before expressed, that all men are dependent on the aid or influence of the divine spirit for their ability to do what God requires, — and this aid I suppose is freely given to those of whom obedience is required. If the Doctor would omit the word "special" in this case, and forbear to represent that God requires men to obey

prior to granting the necessary aid, he would avoid what appears to me a glaring self-contradiction. In regard to the use of the word "special," "supernatural," or any equivalent word, I find no warrant for this use of it in the Bible. If all the works of men which are in the scriptures ascribed to God, are to be accounted for by a "special influence," we may soon find that what we call *special* is very common; and the word may be in danger of losing its present signification. If men would call regeneration or reformation a "special" work, merely on the ground of its importance, I should not object. But it seems to me very desirable that ministers should cease to use any forms of language which implies that God requires of the sinner *present* obedience to the gospel, while he withholds the aid which is essential, as ability to perform the duty required.

However certain it may be that the "obstacle" to the sinner's obedience lies in his own will—however blamable he may be for having such a will, and however free from obligation God may be as to bestowing on him the necessary aid; these ideas by no means imply that the sinner's ability to obey is entire, until the needed aid is conferred. And if special influences of the spirit "belong to the remedial system," it seems reasonable to believe that they belong to it for the very purpose of supplying the defect in the sinner's ability to obey, and that they are in fact bestowed for that very purpose.

It is, however, pleaded, that in family government and in civil government a person is regarded

as having complete ability to obey, if nothing be wanting but a willing mind. Very true; but in such cases it is not affirmed that "special influences of the spirit" are necessary to obedience. Admit the same in regard to obeying the gospel, and then the cases will be parallel or analogous; otherwise they are not, and there is no propriety, that I can see, in the practice of reasoning from the one to the other. The mind of a child may be as strongly opposed to the command of his parent, as it is to the command of God; and he is as dependent on God for ability to obey his parent, as he is for ability to obey the gospel. If he needs "special influences" in the one case, so he does in the other.

Among the many methods which have been adopted to prove that sinners have a complete capacity to repent, they are reminded how freely they choose their own ways,—how frequently they give up one pursuit and adopt another,—how in things moral as well as secular, they change their minds, their courses, and their habits; that the profane person can renounce his practice of swearing,—the thief can give up stealing,—and even the drunkard can discard strong drink, and join a temperance society.

Such examples are very pertinently brought forward by preachers who really believe that God grants aid in proportion to the duties which he requires. But can it be proper for men to urge these facts as proof that sinners have entire ability to do all that God requires, who at the same time believe that special influences—not yet granted, are ne-

cessary to gospel obedience, and not necessary in the cases which they adduce as proofs of a complete capacity to obey? Or can it be proper to adduce such facts as proof of an entire ability to obey, and then contradict what they have said by asserting, that no sinner ever did or ever will repent, unless he has been or shall be favored with special influences of the spirit?

Dr. Beecher says — “every attribute which can be necessary to a full capacity of obedience is discovered; and such as under any form of government, besides that of God, is admitted to constitute an entire capacity and accountability.” Still he believes that there is, in respect to the sinner’s obeying the gospel, an “obstacle” in the way which “furnishes occasion probably for the greatest display of omnipotence ever to be witnessed by the universe.” I may then ask, Has the sinner with his “every attribute” that of “omnipotence?” Has he all that is requisite for removing the “obstacle?”

With regard to some of his brethren Dr. B. says — “I am aware that many good men have been exceedingly jealous for God on this subject, supposing that they augment the evil of sin, and the justice, and the mercy, and the power of God, in exact proportion as they throw down the sinner into a condition of natural and absolute impotency.” p. 29.

Much of the “jealousy” or feeling here described seems to have long existed in our country, in England and in Scotland. Some of the hypotheses which have been adopted to “throw down the sin-

ner," have seemed to me of a tendency to "throw down" the character of a heavenly and benevolent Father to a level with that of a vindictive, unforgiving despot. Dr. B. has indeed with uncommon boldness asserted the sinner's entire ability to do all that God requires of him; yet it seems that he thinks the evil of sin is augmented in proportion as the sinner is thrown down into a condition of *total and invincible sinfulness*. Hence, while he asserts the sinner's full capacity to repent, he represents him as so entirely opposed to his duty that nothing short of a special display of omnipotence can excite him to take a single step in the way of salvation! But when it is understood that this horrid state of total sinfulness was the effect of God's "*wrath and curse*" on account of Adam's offence, what have we for a *sinner*? and what for a God? Have we not for a sinner, a being who was made totally opposed to his duty, by a vindictive act of his Creator? And for a God, instead of a kind Father who has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, have we not a Being who was capable of inflicting the curse of total sinfulness on innumerable millions of little children, to show his displeasure on account of the first sinful act of the first human being!

Near the close of his sermon, Dr. B. seems to have introduced his own experience, either as proof of the correctness of his opinions, or as an illustration of their efficacy. The following are his words:

"If there be any truths which ever brought this soul of mine into the dust before God, with a conscious guilt which was insupportable, and an anguish, the recollection of which, the ages of eternity can-

not obliterate, it was the distinct perception of immortal powers voluntarily withdrawn from the service of God, and the certainty of a profitless and miserable eternity, if in the day of his power, he did not make me willing to obey him." p. 34.

It would have been gratifying to me, had this statement been made in language more simple, perspicuous, and definite. What the Doctor has said in this complicated sentence, may be understood as asserting no more than this, that in the time of his distress, he had a "distinct perception" that the faculties which were given him for the service of God, had been wickedly perverted to other purposes; and that he deeply felt that he must for ever be a miserable being, unless God in mercy should grant his aid, to enable him to break the fetters of sin, and to walk in the path of obedience. Such feelings would appear very natural and proper. But if we are to understand the statement as a practical illustration of the doctrines of the discourse, the meaning, I should suppose, must be of the following import: — "In the time of my distress, I had a 'distinct perception' of the two following facts: 1. That I *then* had an *entire ability to repent*, without any further aid from the Divine Spirit: 2. I had also a clear perception of the fact, that without the *additional aid* of 'the special influences of the Spirit,' it would be impossible for me to obey the Gospel."

As I am not disposed to question the veracity of the preacher, in making his statement, an important question occurs: How was it possible for a man of learning and strong powers of mind, to think that he had "a distinct perception" of the truth of two

propositions so glaringly inconsistent with each other? I am unable to account for such an occurrence, except on the following ground: A man in distress for his soul, will very naturally try to think that he perceives the truth of any doctrine, the belief of which he has been taught to regard as essential to his salvation, or as evidence of a penitent mind. Thus a person who has been so educated as really to think that a belief in the 'Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, is not only essential to salvation, but good evidence of a humble mind, will of course try to think that he has a "distinct perception" of the truth of that doctrine. Nor can I doubt that many have verily thought that they had attained such a perception. At a former period, even in New England, Calvinistic ministers deemed it a very hopeful symptom, when a person, under concern for his soul, was brought to say, "I feel myself *utterly helpless*; I cannot do *any thing* toward working out my own salvation; I must trust entirely on what *Christ has done and suffered for me.*" This was surely somewhat different from "a distinct perception" of an "entire ability to obey the Gospel." But it would seem from Dr. Beecher's sermon and statement, that he thinks he has had "a distinct perception" of *both*—an "entire ability," and "utter helplessness," or a "*complete capacity to obey,*" and a *capacity essentially deficient.* This surely must have been a remarkable state of mind!

I well recollect when it was common, in the region where I had my education, for both ministers and private Christians, in their prayers, to confess that we all sinned in Adam, and fell with him in his

first transgression. Many other ideas of the Westminster creed were very sure to be expressed in almost every prayer. Nor have I a doubt that many persons, educated under the influence of such prayers and corresponding instructions, in giving an account of their experiences might say, that they had *felt guilty* of sinning in Adam; that they had seen it to be just in God that Adam's sin should be imputed to all his posterity; that they had been brought to see that they came into the world with a nature wholly sinful, and also that such was the just displeasure of God the Father against our race, that all of them must have been forever miserable, had not "God the Son" been so compassionate towards us, as to consent to endure the wrath of God the Father, and the full penalty of the law for the elect. I am not in the habit of calling in question the sincerity of my fellow-men in making confessions, declarations, and statements of this kind, in regard to what they *thought* they perceived and felt, when subjected to distress and anxiety. But I have long been convinced that not the least reliance is to be placed on such things, as to the truth of any doctrine whatever. If we admit such things as proof of the truth of a doctrine, we may find proof in abundance for doctrines so different, that they contradict each other in the most palpable and direct manner. The most that such confessions and statements can prove is this, that respectable and perhaps very good persons had been brought to think, or at least to say, thus or so, in favor of some disputed doctrines. But these persons were fallible like other human beings; and other persons equally intelligent, respectable, and

pious, may have been brought to think or say as much in favor of a doctrine directly the reverse of the one first named.

In regard to man's ability and dependence, it is my belief, that every man has ability to do what God requires of him; and that he is wholly and constantly dependent for all this ability. I also believe, that all men, so far as they are brought to view themselves in a just light, will be ready to adopt the language of Paul, as often as they admit that they have ability to do what God requires — “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.” 2. Cor. iii. 5. It is one thing to feel independent and self-sufficient; and quite another thing to feel that we have sufficiency, by the gift of God — sufficiency to do what he requires, and sufficiency for which we are responsible, and of which we are liable to be dispossessed at any moment, according to the pleasure of the Divine Benefactor.

PART. III.

MAN'S CAPACITY TO OBEY, CONSISTENT WITH DEPENDENCE, AND COMMENSURATE WITH DUTY.

CHAP. I.

IN reading the Scriptures my mind has often been impressed by the following facts. Mankind are uniformly represented as entirely dependent on God, for their existence, their faculties, their sufficiency, for the success of their enterprises, and for every good and perfect gift; yet the commandments of the Lord are addressed to them as to beings possessed of adequate capacities to do whatever God requires. By pondering on these facts and comparing them with the language frequently uttered by ministers of the gospel, I have been led to suspect that incorrect views are entertained concerning man's capacity to obey, by a great portion of the Christians in our land. How many speak of man's capacity to obey in a form which seems to exclude the idea of dependence! Again, how many speak of man's dependence in a manner which implies inability to do their duty! If, however, it is as dependent agents that we are required

to obey or to act, why should not this dependence be acknowledged, and kept constantly in view? And if God has rendered us capable of obedience, why should our dependence be spoken of as though it implied inability? If men were required to obey without Divine aid, they might sit down in despair; for this would be impossible. Or if our dependence implied incapacity, we might regard God as a hard Master. But if God has endowed us with all the capacity which is necessary to do what he requires, and we are constantly dependent on him for this capacity, we surely ought to feel that such are the facts, and act accordingly. Paul, in addressing Christians, said — “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Philip. ii. 12, 13. Here our dependence is urged as a reason for our activity, or a motive to obedience — not as implying any inability.

Should a parent require of his children to do what he knows is beyond their capacity, he would be deemed cruel. A king who should thus treat his subjects would be reproached as a tyrant. What then must be the effect of teaching and believing that God constantly requires such services as far transcend the capacities of mankind, whether saints or sinners! Can such views be habitually entertained without producing injurious effects? Surely not. Yet I may seriously ask, Are not such views very commonly entertained in our land, and in all Christian countries? Indeed what is more common than to hear even good people complaining of their inability to do their duty, or to obey the holy precepts of the gospel?

Another inquiry now occurs. If it be a revealed truth, that the capacities of men are commensurate with their duty, how has it happened that the contrary opinion is so generally prevalent? In reply it may be said, that children commonly believe as they are taught; and a great portion of the children of our country have been taught according to the doctrines contained in the Catechisms of the Westminster Assembly of Divines. One of which is the following:—“No mere man since the fall is able in this life perfectly to keep the commandments of God; but daily doth break them in thought, word, and deed.” The same Divines also taught, that among the dreadful effects of Adam's sin to his posterity is this—“the corruption of their whole nature, whereby they are *utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite* to all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to evil, and that continually.” Such doctrines were deemed orthodox in New England till within the last sixty years. So lately as when I was a young man, if any one ventured to ask—How can it be just in God to require obedience of men who by the fall of Adam were “utterly disabled?” the following was deemed a correct answer—“God has not lost his power of commanding, though men have lost their power of obeying.”

Within the last half century there has been a considerable change of opinion on this subject among those who have regarded themselves as the orthodox clergy of New England. The Calvinistic doctrine of “utter disability” has been pretty generally discarded; and a distinction has been adopted between natural ability and moral ability, or natural

inability and moral inability. By the help of this distinction ministers have felt authorized to say, that sinners have all the natural ability which is requisite to obey the gospel; that their inability is wholly of the moral kind, consisting in total depravity of heart, or opposition of will to God and their duty. But this opposition, this moral inability has been regarded as so total and so great, that nothing can remove it short of the omnipotence of God, or the supernatural influences of his spirit. A number of texts of scripture have been employed to prove these supposed facts; which I hope to examine impartially in a future chapter. I may here but briefly ask, Of what possible use can natural faculties be in regard to obedience, if on account of Adam's sin these faculties have been so subjected to the control of a heart totally depraved, that nothing short of the special* influence of the divine spirit can enable the sinner to repent? These natural faculties may indeed be of use as soon as the supposed supernatural* aid is given; but till then, there seems to be a "disability" as "utter" as was supposed by the Calvinists. And if the total depravity of heart is an *hereditary curse*, on account of Adam's offence, why is it not truly a *natural defect or inability*, as well as one that is of a moral nature?

* The terms *special* and *supernatural* I use as synonymous, and in reference to the opinion of those who suppose that the *common* influences of the spirit are insufficient for regeneration. But whether this opinion is well founded may be a question deserving of the most serious consideration. For the prevalence of this opinion may have done much to establish the idea of man's inability to obey the gospel.

CHAP. II.

The Title explained.

The Title of this work will naturally excite an expectation of an attempt to prove two propositions:

I. That man's capacity to obey is consistent with dependence. II. That his capacity is commensurate with his duty. In man's *capacity to obey*, I mean to include every thing which is requisite to free agency, and a capacity for doing what God requires of each individual.

The capacity to obey must imply intellectual faculties for free agency, and such information as is necessary to understand what is required, and to distinguish between moral right and wrong, obedience and disobedience. If bodily or muscular strength is requisite to obey a particular command, this is given according to the requirement. So in whatever manner divine aid is requisite to constitute a capacity to obey, this aid is granted.

It is not, however, supposed that every being in human form has a capacity for moral obedience. Children are not supposed to be moral agents as soon as they are born; and some are idiots all their days. No moral precept can be obligatory on persons in such a state. It is also to be observed that among human beings, who are regarded as moral agents, there are endless varieties and disproportions in their different or individual capacities. While some of our race are perhaps in this state, but little lower than some of the angels; there are

others who may be very little higher than the most intelligent of elephants or of dogs. But each moral agent has all the capacity which is requisite to the performance of such moral duties as are required of him.

Man's capacity to obey is consistent with dependence. That mankind are dependent on God for all their capacity to obey, is as clearly the dictate of reason, as of revelation. A creature must be dependent on his Creator, not only for his existence, but for all his faculties, and all his sufficiency of every kind. He is not only dependent for his first existence and sufficiency as a moral being, but he continues to exist and to act in a state of entire dependence. As a child advances from infancy to manhood, he may become less dependent on his parents and his fellow-creatures; but not less dependent on God. If he is not more dependent on God in adult age than he was in infancy, he is *dependent far more*, in proportion as he now possesses more than he did when a babe at the breast. Nor is he in mature age merely dependent for his capacity to obey the Gospel; he is equally so, for all his capacity for secular employments. Children are not less dependent on God for a capacity to obey their parents; than for a capacity to obey their Maker.

One fact in relation to this subject, seems to me not to have been duly understood and considered. In the Scriptures, good people are represented to be as dependent on God as the impenitent sinner, for all his capacity to obey. It has been very common to speak of the impenitent as dependent, and to say that they "can do nothing of themselves"—meaning that they

cannot do their duty without divine assistance, or the aid of God's spirit. This is very true, in the sense such language is used in the Bible; but it is as true of the most perfect saint, as it is of the most profligate sinner. This dependence on God is universal. Of all our race it may be truly said — *In God we live, and move, and have our being*; and without Him *we can do nothing*. Such perfect dependence on God, I believe is as true of angels as of men; and if we may rely on the words of the Messiah, it was so with him. But neither Christ nor his Apostles mentioned this dependence as implying incapacity to do any duty that God required.

The following are some of the passages of Scripture in which man's dependence is acknowledged or declared:

“Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh in vain.” Ps. cxxvii. 1.

“The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, are from the Lord.” Prov. xvi. 1.

“A man can receive nothing, except it be given him of God.” John iii. 27.

Paul used the following words — “I know nothing of myself.” 1 Cor. iv. 4.

“I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.” Philip. iv. 13.

“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.” 2 Cor. iii. 5.

James says — “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.” James i. 17.

The language of Christ respecting his dependence is still more remarkable. Though God had given him the "spirit not by measure," yet he used the following language:

"The son can do nothing of himself but what he seeth the Father do. The Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth. I can of mine own self do nothing; as I hear I judge." John v. 19, 20, 30.

Again he said—"As my Father *taught* me I speak these things." John viii. 28. "The word which I speak, I speak not of myself; the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. John xiv. 10. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Matthew xxviii. 18.

Other passages equally expressive of his sense of entire dependence might be quoted from the discourses of the Messiah; but these are sufficient. Now, if he, in whom it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, and who had power even to raise the dead, could truly say, "I can of mine own self do nothing," it surely may be proper for all his disciples to adopt similar language. Feeling thus their dependence, they may work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, encouraged by the thought that God is with them and worketh in them to will and to do of his good pleasure.

But if a state of dependence were inconsistent with a capacity to obey, we might look in vain for such a capacity in any being except Jehovah himself. Such, however, I believe to be the fact, that while all created intelligent beings are perfectly dependent on God, there is one great principle of equity

observed in all the moral requirements of God, which, duly considered, will evince that man's capacity to obey, is not only consistent with dependence, but commensurate with his duty.

By *commensurate with his duty*, I mean that every man who is a moral agent, has a capacity to obey, exactly proportionate to the requirements of God, as they relate to himself; so that he is without excuse when he fails to do what God requires of him. This great principle of divine government will be the topic of the next chapter. I may here, however, observe, that while it is a solemn truth that we can do *nothing of ourselves*, it is a consoling truth that we are not required *so to act*; and also a truth that we constantly have the aid of God's spirit, so far as this is necessary to render our capacity to obey commensurate with our duty. God is not a Pharaoh to require the full tale of brick, while he withholds the necessary straw. This I hope to make evident before the inquiry shall be closed.

CHAP. III.

The Revealed Principle in Divine Government.

That God's requirements of men are ever in proportion to the extent of their several capacities is clearly intimated in the following words of Christ. "To whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required." Luke 12, 48. Of course where

less is given, less is required; and when no capacity for moral obedience is given, no moral duty is demanded.

The same principle is implied in the first and great commandment. To love the Lord with all the *heart*, all the *understanding*, and all the *strength* is all that is required of any one, whether the capacity be great or small. The ignorant and feeble man is not required to love or obey with the capacity of his brother who possesses far greater understanding and strength than himself; nor is he required to do according to the capacity of his more highly favored brother. Besides, we are expressly assured, that "where there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."

This great principle of equity is recognised in various parts of the Bible. The sin-offerings and trespass-offerings, under the Mosaic laws, were to be made on this principle, or according to each person's ability. In the parables of the talents and the pounds, the same principle is illustrated. He who faithfully used his *two* talents was commended in the same language as the one who had faithfully employed his *five* talents. He who had but *one*, was not blamed because he originally had no more, but for neglecting to employ the one he had in a useful manner. On the same principle our Lord said, "This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." John iii. 19. Again on the same principle Jesus said — "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not

had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin." John xv. 22. It was too on this principle that he represented the people of Chorazin and Bethsaida as exposed to a heavier doom than the ancient inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The astonishing varieties to be found in the capacities of our race, resulting from diversity of age, diversity of mental endowments, diversity of education, and other external advantages, are so covered and qualified by the great principle of equity, as in one respect to reduce the whole race to a common level or standard—showing that nothing is required of any one but according to his own capacity, and that this is required of all. No one is held responsible for any mental faculty, any bodily strength, any light or advantage possessed by another, if not allowed to himself. "Whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law," and not to those who are without the law. So whatsoever things the gospel saith, it saith to them who are under the gospel; and not to those who are denied this privilege. The capacities of individuals are liable to change; they may be increased or diminished. But the requirements of God meet all these circumstances in the most perfect manner. A man who was yesterday in a state of health may to-day be laid on a bed of sickness; yesterday he might be of sound mind, and to day insane. The requirements of God have been abated in respect to him just in proportion as his capacity has abated. Or perhaps I might more properly say, that the same law of equity which applied to his condition yesterday, applies to his

condition to day; and as less is given, less is required. Whatever may have been the immediate cause of his present disability, his present duty cannot exceed his present capacity.

The principle under review will show what must have been the result had the doctrine been true, that by the apostasy of Adam all his posterity became "utterly indisposed, disabled and made opposite to all that is spiritually good." Had such been the effect of Adam's sin, his posterity would indeed have been utterly incapable of obedience; but this is not all; they would have been free from obligation to obey. As no capacity of obedience would have been "GIVEN," no duty could have been required. Such an hereditary and constitutional defect and disability would surely go as far to excuse or exempt a person from obligation to obey the gospel, as a total privation of gospel light, or even the want of intellectual faculties.

The same principle of equity may help us to a clearer understanding of the popular hypothesis, that God requires men to repent, while in the exercise of his sovereignty he withholds from them such *special* influences of his spirit as are essential to enable them to obey the gospel. But his requirement is, *much of him to whom much is given* — not of him from whom *much* is withheld. If God withholds any thing which is essential to obedience, that thing must be essential to a capacity to obey. Hence, if I am not under a great mistake, the duty cannot be obligatory till all is given which is essential to render obedience practicable.

That the influence of the spirit or divine aid is

necessary to constitute a capacity of obedience, I admit to be true, in regard to both saints and sinners. This aid I believe is given in proportion as duty is required. Not miraculous or supernatural influences, but *such* and *all* that is necessary to render the capacity commensurate with the requirements of God,—and thus sufficient to leave the saint and the sinner without excuse in their transgressions.

In my opinion, all the faculties and properties of every kind which are necessary to constitute a capacity to obey, are of God; and may properly be said to be the work of his spirit. As by his spirit he garnished the heavens, so by the same spirit he garnishes the minds of men, with all their apparatus for free agency and moral obedience. But the great principle of equity covers the whole ground of dependence, as it shows that no more is required than according to what is given. God does not hold us responsible for favors which he denies; but for such and such only as he causes us actually to possess. I cannot believe that he requires of any man to day, the *present* exercise or employment of such aid as he withholds till tomorrow, and may never bestow. To ascribe to God the exercise of such a kind of sovereignty as this, seems to me in a high degree reproachful to his character.

CHAP. IV.

The Ground of the First Objection examined.

To the views I have given of man's capacity to obey, Christ's own words will occur as the first objection.

"No man can come unto me, except the Father who sent me draw him." John vi. 44.

No other passage of scripture has been perhaps more generally misapprehended and misapplied than this; nor so often resorted to as proof of man's inability to obey, until he is made the subject of a supernatural influence of the divine spirit. Even ministers, who say that the text only expresses a moral inability, have generally spoken of that inability as a constitutional enmity to God, so total that it is an impossibility for a sinner to repent, until his heart is changed by a supernatural influence. But, in my opinion, this is not the meaning of the text.

I admit that the phrase "come unto me," most probably meant receiving and obeying Jesus as the Messiah. But the declaration, "No man can come unto me, except the Father draw him," does not necessarily imply any thing more than man's entire dependence on God for his capacity to obey. Such dependence I have freely admitted. Prior to making this declaration, Christ had in the most solemn and positive manner asserted his own dependence on the Father, as so entire that of himself he could "*do nothing*." Is it then wonderful, that he should

try to impress the minds of his hearers with a deep sense of their dependence on God?

That my meaning may be more obvious, I will again quote from the 127th Psalm—“Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.” This was, I conceive, a declaration of this important truth, that men are dependent on God for ability and success in all their lawful pursuits, and was equivalent to saying—No man can build a house, except he is favored with the assistance of God. But this is not a ground on which a man may properly plead that he cannot build a house without special or supernatural aid of the Holy Spirit; nor a ground on which he may indulge an indolent temper, or excuse a neglect of duty.

Some may say that the phrase, except the Father *draw* him, implies that every man is by nature opposed to coming to Christ, till by supernatural influence he is made willing. But the word “*draw*” does not necessarily imply such an idea. Christ said, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will *draw* all men unto me.” In the following passage we have God saying—“with *loving kindness* have I *drawn* thee.” Jer. xxxi. 3. So a man may be drawn to Christ by the displays of “*loving kindness*” in his giving his life for our salvation.

That the entire dependence of every man on God is the principal idea in the text under review, I have very little doubt. That this view of the text is correct may appear more probable from the following verses. For Christ immediately added—“It is written in the prophets—They shall all be taught of God.” To this prediction Christ subjoin-

ed — “ Every man that hath *heard* and *learned* of the Father cometh unto me.” The use which Christ made of the prediction, in explaining what he had said, seems plainly to imply that “ *hearing* and *learning* of the Father,” “ being taught of God,” is of the same import as being *drawn* by the Father.

Besides, prior to closing his discourse Christ gave a reason for what he had said, verse 44. “ But there are some among you who believe not. Therefore I said unto you that no man can come to me except it be given him of my Father.” v. 64, 65. It is observable how Christ quoted or repeated what he had before said. In the first instance he used the phrase “ except the Father *draw him* ;” but in the second he said — “ except it be *given him of my Father*.” These two forms of speech are then of similar import. Christ has, therefore, furnished us with four forms of speech expressive of the same idea. To be *drawn* by the Father is to be *taught of God*, to *learn* of the Father, and to have it *given* of the Father.

Between the two clauses which I quoted from the 64th and 65th verses, John introduced an explanatory note after the clause, “ But there are some of you which believe not ” — here John says — “ For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.” By this note it seems that John understood Jesus to have particular reference to Judas, when he said, “ No man can come to me,” &c. Though Judas had been in Christ’s school, he had not so *learned of the Father* as to become a humble disciple of Christ.

I think I have shown that the words of Christ in verse 44th were not uttered by Christ to teach us the doctrine of inability, either natural or moral; and that they do not necessarily imply any thing more than man's entire dependence on God for every good gift and every perfect gift — a dependence which is common to all created intelligences. It is, however, possible, and perhaps probable, that Christ had in view the prejudices and other obstacles which were to be overcome by those who embraced him as the Messiah, or became his disciples. The Pharisees were at that time a powerful sect. Their influence was great; and many of them were a covetous and worldly-minded people, and their prejudices against Jesus were strong and violent. These facts occasioned great obstacles to the success of the Messiah's ministry. That Christ had such obstacles in view may appear probable from what he said on other occasions. The following passages were uttered by him probably on the same principle. "No man can serve two masters." — "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Such language teaches indeed that it is impossible for a person truly to serve God while he prefers mammon or riches as his chief good. On the same principle Paul said — "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God:" that is, men who are carnally minded, who suffer themselves to live under the dominion of worldly and sensual appetites, cannot, in such a state of mind, please God. But such language does not imply that it is impossible for such persons to repent, to deny themselves, to change the objects of their preference, or cease to do evil and learn to do well.

In several parables Christ very plainly taught that love to worldly objects was what in a great degree rendered his preaching unsuccessful. This is taught in the parable of the sower, the parable of the great supper, and the parable of the marriage of the king's son. But he never intimated any disability or inability in mankind resulting to them from Adam's transgression, or from God's displeasure on account of that sin. He did not so much as name Adam, or allude to his fall, in the course of his ministry.

CHAP. V.

The Second Objection Examined — and further remarks on the use of *can* and *cannot*.

What our Lord said to Nicodemus on regeneration has been supposed to furnish a strong argument in favor of the sinner's inability to obey the gospel. Of course the same thing will be supposed to furnish strong ground for an objection to the doctrine which I have attempted to establish. The following are the words which demand consideration.

“Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” “Except a man be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” John iii. 3, 5..

I have not a doubt of the truth of these declarations; but whether they have in general been correctly understood, is another question. The same

Messiah said — “ *my words they are spirit and they are life.*” To be *born* or *begotten* by “the incorruptible seed, the *word* of God” — to be born of the *spirit*, and to be born of God, are, as I conceive, different forms of expressing the same change; and John says, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” It hence appears that God, his spirit, his word, the preachers of the gospel, and he who becomes a believer in Jesus, have all an agency in the work of regeneration.

The language of Christ to Nicodemus was no stronger than what he used to his apostles, when they had been contending about which of them should be the greatest. Having placed a little child in the midst of them, he said — “Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of God.” This was said to the Twelve, after they had been a considerable time in the family of Christ, as his disciples; and probably, excepting Judas, they were true disciples — had been born of God. But they had indulged an aspiring and contentious spirit, which was the reverse of the meek and humble spirit of their Master. Hence they needed to be *converted*. This implied repentance for what they had done amiss — a return to the path of duty. For this purpose they needed the influence or aid of the same spirit which they had in their first exercises of regeneration, and the same kind of influence.

On another occasion Jesus said to them, “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew

v. 20. Again he said to them, "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me." "For without me ye can do nothing." John xv. 4, 5. To abide in Christ, was the same as to be led by the spirit, to walk as Christ walked.

The impenitent need to be born of God that they may have spiritual life — that the kingdom of God may be set up in their hearts, that kingdom which is "not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." If a person has once been converted, and subsequently indulges a worldly or a contentious spirit, he needs the same renovating influences for his recovery which he had formerly enjoyed. Hence, as Christ is the medium through which God communicates the life-giving influence, the disciples were taught the necessity of their abiding in him, that they might bring forth fruit. As without Christ, or without the divine spirit the apostles themselves could "*do nothing*," we may feel assured that the penitent and the impenitent are alike dependent on the aids of the divine spirit for a capacity to obey. Hence the apostle Paul bowed his knees to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in behalf of the Christians at Ephesus, beseeching that they might be "strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man." Eph. iii. 14-16.

I shall now introduce other passages to show the scriptural use of the word *cannot* and *can*.

In characterizing a class of vile men, Peter says of them — "Having eyes full of adultery which

cannot cease from sin." 2 Peter, ii. 14. This language expresses a strong propensity to licentious pleasures — not inability to repent.

On a certain occasion the Israelites professed a determination to "serve the Lord." Joshua replied — "Ye cannot serve the Lord; for he is a holy God." This remark was probably occasioned by an apprehension that the people had not duly considered the holiness of God's service, and from a wish that they might act more deliberately on that solemn occasion. For when Joshua had done discoursing on this point, they renewed their promise, saying — "The Lord our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey." Joshua made no further objection; and it is immediately added — "So Joshua made a covenant with the people on that day." See Joshua xxiv. 19 — 25.

In several instances *cannot* is used to express integrity, or strong attachment to a good cause. In reply to the solicitations of an impudent woman, Joseph said — "How *can* I do this great wickedness and sin against God." This was the same as saying, I *cannot* do this great wickedness. It was expressive of his integrity of heart, and his abhorrence of crime.

When the Sanhedrim commanded the apostles to preach no more in the name of Jesus, they replied — "We *cannot* but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Acts iv. 20. Thus they expressed their ardor in the cause of Christ.

It is said of God — "He *cannot* deny himself." 2 Tim. ii. 13. Again — "It was *impossible* for him to lie." Heb. vi. 18. I would here ask, Can

any intelligent man believe that the inspired writers meant to assert any kind of *inability* in God? If not, why should any infer from such language that God is the subject of a *moral inability*?

I may now bring together two texts in which the word *cannot* is used to express very opposite feelings of mind.

“ We *cannot* but speak the things we have seen and heard.”

“ I have married a wife, and therefore I *cannot* come.”

In each of these cases, ardor of mind was strongly expressed; but how striking the contrast! I would now ask, is there any thing in either of these cases to which the term *inability* can be properly applied? And is it not to be regretted that the words *moral inability* have been applied to cases of the *cannot* in which no inability was intended to be expressed?

Let it be observed that the text last quoted is found in a parable; and its literal reference was to going to a great supper. Suppose then a similar case among us. A man of eminence has made a great supper, and invited many guests. To this invitation one of the men replies — “ I have married a wife, and therefore I *cannot* come.” What reflecting person would deem it proper to say that this man is under a *moral inability* to go to the feast; and that a *special* influence of the spirit is necessary to enable him to go? If this would not be proper in the case now proposed, why should we deem it proper in reference to the same words as they are employed by the Saviour? Attachment to worldly objects and sensual pleasures were repre-

sented by him as the principal reasons why the gospel invitations are disregarded, without the least intimation that men are the subjects of inability to come, which cannot be removed but by a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit.

CHAP. VI.

Several Causes of the Prevalent Impression.

That a general impression exists on the minds of people in our country, that man's capacity to obey is not commensurate with his duty, will probably be neither denied nor doubted. Some of the causes of such an impression have already been considered. Others may now be briefly noticed. These may be found in correlative opinions which, I think, have resulted from misapprehensions respecting the origin and nature of human depravity, and the necessity of regeneration.

It has been a common opinion that the depravity of Adam's posterity has been the effect of God's displeasure on account of his offence; that on this account his posterity had entailed on them the curse of a nature wholly sinful, from which all their sinful volitions proceed. But, in my opinion, this is a false view of the subject, and grossly reproachful to God. It is my belief that the posterity of Adam become sinners as our first parents did, not by possessing a sinful nature prior to their first sinful volitions, but by yielding to animal propensities, in

violation of the commands of God. If the sin of Adam can be accounted for without the hypothesis of an antecedent sinful nature, why may we not account for the sinful volitions of his offspring on similar ground?

It has also been supposed, that mankind by nature love sin *as sin*, and are thus led into courses of vice. But surely it was not from love to sin *as sin*, that Adam became a transgressor; nor can I discover the least reason for supposing that it is so with his offspring. Men are generally led to violate the commands of God by the hope of some pleasure or profit, as the fruit of disobedience. This accords with the account we have of the motives by which Eve was induced to steal the forbidden fruit; and I suspect that every thief can say, it was not love to theft *as theft* by which I was first induced to steal. It is very true that, in some cases, the expected pleasure or profit accompanies the sinful act; but it is, I believe, the pleasure or profit which operates as the motive to disobedience. Let any man reflect on his own sinful acts, and ask himself, whether he was induced to commit them from love to sin *as sin*?

It has also been supposed that regeneration would have been unnecessary, had it not been that men are by nature totally depraved; and that such is the extent of their depravity, that a supernatural influence of the divine spirit is necessary to effect the change. But in what part of the Bible do we find such an account of the necessity of regeneration? Christ indeed said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." But he did not say, That which is

born of the flesh is *sin*. Yet how many reason on the subject as though he had made this assertion unquestionably and unequivocally! What he did say furnishes a reason why regeneration is necessary; because by being born of the flesh we have only *animal life*, and to enter the heavenly kingdom we need *spiritual life*. This we have by being born of the spirit. Were it true that men come into the world cursed with a nature wholly sinful, it would be natural to suppose that nothing short of miraculous agency could effect their renovation. But if backsliding Christians may be renovated from their wanderings by the power of gospel truths, and the common influences or aids of the spirit, why should we imagine that supernatural influences are necessary to effect the regeneration of an impenitent sinner. When a person is in a state of backsliding, what is he better than an impenitent sinner. It is very true that on the day of Pentecost, when three thousand persons were supposed to be converted, miracles were wrought prior to the inquiry, "What shall we do?" Nor is it doubted that the miracles had great influence to excite attention, to convince the multitude that Jesus, who had been crucified, had also been raised from the dead, — that he was the true Messiah, — and that it was of high importance to become his disciples. The accounts of that day afford abundant evidence that the apostles were on that occasion the subjects of miraculous influence, by which they were enabled to speak in languages which they had never studied; but no intimation is given that miracles were wrought in the hearts of the three thousand converts, to enable

them to repent. Many of these converts were probably persons who might properly have been called backsliders, and on that occasion were received to become the disciples of the Messiah. We know that when by any special occurrence of providence, a general attention is excited in Christian societies, many church members, who had fallen into a state of coldness and backsliding, have been aroused from their slumbers as well as others who had never professed religion. And why is not the recovery of such backsliders as important as the repentance of those who never joined a church? And where is our warrant for saying, that the operations of the spirit in the two cases are so different, that in the one, they are to be called *common*, in the other, *special* or supernatural? I am unacquainted with any scriptural warrant for this distinction; and it is my belief, that no such warrant can be found in the Bible.

If we look into the messages which John was required to write to the seven churches of Asia, we may find that repentance was as solemnly required of church members, who had fallen from "their first love," or had adopted evil courses, as it ever was of men who had never professed religion, nor had any to profess. In both cases, safety and salvation depended on obedience to the call to repent. The messages are represented as from Christ, and as dictated by the spirit. Hence the words so often repeated — "He that hath an ear let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches." In the message to professors who were "neither cold nor hot," Jesus said — "Behold I stand at

the door and knock ; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in, and will sup with him, and he with me." Rev. iii. 20. By the word, the providence and the spirit of God, Christ may be said to be knocking at every sinner's heart who lives under the light of the gospel; and this representation may teach us, that, on God's part, all things are ready, as to man's capacity and obligation to obey. Would the merciful Saviour have represented himself as standing, and knocking for entrance, had he supposed the persons addressed were destitute of such aids of the spirit as were necessary to hearing his voice and opening the door? I think not; it is much easier for me to admit that heretofore I was under a mistake in regard to man's capacity to obey, than it is to believe that God and his Son have acted a deceptive part in their dealings with mankind.

CHAP. VII.

The Tendency of the prevalent Belief.

The prevalent belief, that God requires more of mankind than he gives them a capacity to perform, must, it seems to me, have had in many respects a pernicious tendency. Some of which I shall suggest in the following queries.

1. Must not such a belief have had an unfavorable influence on the minds of men, in respect to the justice and benignity of God? What would be the

probable effect on the minds of a family of children, should they daily live in the belief, that their father knowingly and constantly requires of them more than it is possible for them to do, with the utmost care, diligence and exertion? Is it possible for them to regard his precepts as reasonable? and must not his character appear to them not only unkind but unjust? And if their views of his requirements are correct, what must be the character of the father?

2. If these children act under the impression, that their father knowingly requires more than they can do, and more than he expects that they will accomplish, will they not very naturally be less careful to do according to their ability, than they would under a belief that nothing unreasonable is required? As the precepts appear to them unjust, will they not reason in the following manner? Do what we can we shall accomplish but a part of what is required, and of course be exposed to punishment. Besides, it is very uncertain how much our father expects of us. Would not such a feeling produce irreverence both for the precepts and the father—a despair of gaining his approbation, and consequent remissness?

3. What views must these children have of the nature of such violations of their father's precepts as they believe have resulted from incapacity to obey? They may feel deep concern on account of their exposedness to punishment; but is it possible for them to feel humble contrition for such offences? What in truth is the nature of such violations of law as result from incapacity to obey? And who

is the more blamable, the father or his children? This I suspect is a species of transgression not known under the government of God.

Now let Christians, who have lived under the impression that God's requirements transcend their capacity to obey, transfer the foregoing queries to themselves, and then say whether their own experience does not justify the representation which has been given of the tendency of such a belief. Have you been as careful in all things to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God, as you probably would have been, had you believed your capacities commensurate with your duty? What have been your views of such sins as you imputed to a want of a capacity to do all that was required? And what must have been God's views of your confessions of such violations of his law? Can he have been pleased with confessions of sin which implied that the real blame was on his own part, in requiring more than he gave you a capacity to do?

4. Must not the prevalent impression have a sad influence on education? While parents believe that God requires more of them and of their children than either of them is able to do, unless he should grant a supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit; must not this belief have a disheartening tendency, causing the parents to feel as if little if any encouragement was given to train up children in the way they should go? Is there not reason to think that, with such views, parents are really less careful to do all in their power than they would be if they really believed that no impossibilities are required, either of themselves or their children?

Besides, what must be the effects of this belief on the minds of children and young people? If from infancy children are taught that God requires more of them than they are able to perform, they must of course grow up with the impression, that God is an austere and hard master. Their inability they will regard as their calamity and their excuse, not their sin. Especially so, if they are made to believe that their inability is a curse brought on them by Adam's sin, or God's displeasure.

I can hardly think of any thing more injurious to children than to train them up with minds imbued with impressions so dishonorable to God. Nor can I doubt that such a training has been injurious to millions in our own country. It is very true that parents do not, in plain language, tell their children, that God is a cruel or hard master; but is not that idea clearly implied in what has been abundantly said to children, or in their hearing, of man's utter inability to obey the gospel, or to keep the commandments of the Lord?

5. Is there not reason to believe, that much of the inconsistency in professors of religion and much of the depravity of those who make no profession, have resulted from the belief, that God really requires that of all mankind which to them is impossible? Had all the adults of our country grown up with minds deeply imbued with the belief, that God is a Father so just and kind that he never requires of any rational being more duty than he gives a capacity to perform, and that there can be no excuse for any real violation of his law; how very different might have been the characters of our

countrymen and the state of society, compared with what is now generally witnessed! Had we all been educated in the real belief that God is love, or so benevolent that it is impossible for him to require more of his creatures than according to the capacities which he gives, would not sin have appeared a far more evil and bitter thing than it does while it is believed that no mere man has a capacity commensurate with his duty? Who then can doubt that the prevalent impression has done very much to promote depravity, and to prevent a thorough reformation?

There are doubtless several obstacles in the way of the sinner's return to God; and this I believe to be one which has a powerful and paralyzing influence — The general belief that the God who commands the duty, fails to give the requisite capacity to obey — except occasionally when he grants the supernatural or special influences of the spirit. How could the character of God be exhibited in a light more odious and appalling than by representing that he exercises his sovereignty by thus withholding what he knows to be necessary to the capacity of obedience, and then punishing with everlasting destruction all who neglect to repent!

CHAP. VIII.

Illustrations from the nature of Sin.

John says, " Sin is a transgression of the law;" and from what has been said of man's capacity to obey we may perhaps obtain evidence of the correctness of this declaration, and more correct views of the evil of sin than those which have been generally entertained. If man's capacity to obey is consistent with his dependence and commensurate with his duty, transgression must be ungrateful and altogether inexcusable. It cannot be found in any thing in us or done by us which we had not a capacity to prevent or avoid. It cannot therefore consist in any thing derived from any ancestor which was found in us antecedent to our own sinful volitions. But it must be the nature of voluntary disobedience. Yet how many Christians are in the habit of confessing that they were born with a nature wholly sinful, or that they sinned in Adam and fell with him in his first transgression. What views of sin are entertained when such confessions are made? Can it be any thing more criminal than calamity that men thus deplore?

Again, how many Christians are in the habit of confessing that they sin in all their actions; that there is enough of sin in their best services to render them deserving of God's endless wrath! Yet these very persons profess to be the humble and obedient followers of Christ. How are we to account for such confessions but on the ground that those who

make them habitually believe that they have not capacities commensurate with their duty? Is it possible that such Christians mean to confess that they voluntarily live in constant disobedience to God; that they are so abandoned as to be voluntary rebels in all their prayers and thanksgivings to God, and in all they do with a professed design to promote his cause in the world? If they do mean this, is it possible that they should at the same time believe that they are the followers of God as dear children? If they are conscious of such habitual and voluntary disobedience, on what ground can they find evidence that they have been born of God?

Some professed Christians have gone even further in such self-degrading confessions than those I have mentioned. The Rev. John Brown, author of the Dictionary of the Holy Bible, has the following passage in Memoirs of himself: — “The mercies I have received and the sins I have committed are innumerable. God has been doing — I had almost said, all that he can to save, comfort and favor me; and I have been acting to my utmost, in opposing and dishonoring him. And now, after all he has performed, and all that I have professed, I am good for nothing, neither to teach nor to learn, neither to live nor to die; but am both in heart and life evil, only evil, superabundantly evil unto this day.” His biographer quoted this as ample proof of Mr. Brown’s “modesty and humility.” He regarded Mr. Brown as one of the excellent of the earth, and lets us know that in speaking of himself or his spiritual state, “his language was not only

that of hope but of the full assurance of faith." He then adds — "He on one occasion declared himself as assured of his eternal felicity, as that there was an eternity."

It is not for me to question Mr. Brown's piety; but I may and do question the propriety of his declarations respecting his sinfulness. I also question the possibility of reconciling them to the truth if he was a good man. What could the most abandoned profligate, or even Satan, say of himself worse than this—I am "both in heart and life evil, only evil, superabundantly evil unto this day?" I am willing to admit that good people have a deeper sense of the evil of sin and of their own sins in particular, than is possessed by the impenitent. But when such exaggerated expressions of their own vileness are regarded as evidence of humility or goodness of heart, is there not reason to fear that they will be adopted by hypocrites, and prove means of self-deception, and of deceiving others? Besides, if Mr. Brown regarded such language as a proof of humility, what was it better than saying *I am a very humble man*? But if he was sincere in these declarations and still possessed the "assurance of faith" in regard to his own salvation, what must have been his views of sin? and what his views of the Christian character? The language of Christ is, "Then are ye my disciples if ye *do whatsoever I command you*;" not if ye do to your "utmost in opposing and dishonoring God." It may be further asked, what would Mr. Brown have thought of a neighboring minister, had he characterized Mr. Brown in his own language? Would he not have deemed him a

slanderer. Has it then come to this, that a person's confessing that he is as bad as the Evil One is to be regarded as proof that he is a humble disciple of the Lord Jesus! How false must be the views of sin or of the Christian character which have given rise to such a state of things! It is surely time that this subject should be examined, and that more correct views should be adopted.

In a preceding chapter I mentioned some of the causes of the general impression that God requires more of men than they have a capacity to perform. I may here mention another. Men have not been careful to distinguish between *liability to sin* and a *sinful nature*. As all men have found themselves liable to sin, it seems to have been inferred that such could not have been the case had they not possessed a sinful nature. But neither liability to sin nor actual transgression is any proof of a previous sinful nature; for Adam and Eve were liable to sin, and did actually transgress; yet it is not supposed that they had a sinful nature as the cause of their liability to sin. Persons who have been educated, as Mr. Brown was, in the belief that all are born with a sinful nature, from which all actual transgressions proceed, will readily imagine that this sinful nature is all that renders them liable to sin. Hence those animal senses, appetites and passions, which expose to temptation, are accounted sinful. If such persons become good people, they still possess these animal properties; growth in grace or holiness does not extirpate them; hence they complain of their sinful nature as contaminating all their services. While in truth these properties are in themselves innocent

and useful; and all we are required to do respecting them is, to subject them to the law of love, and not indulge them in a forbidden manner. If whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, we do all to the glory of God, we may gratify our animal senses and appetites and thus enjoy the good things of divine providence without transgression. It is no more sinful in us to possess these animal properties than it is to be born with bodies of flesh, to which these properties belong. They are a part of the nature with which our first parents were created, and they have been hereditary in all their posterity.

CHAP. IX.

Views of the Christian Spectator and Dr. Woods.

In a review in the Christian Spectator for June, 1832, we have the following remarks on the necessity of the divine influence in regeneration:—

“At the same time we maintain that man has, in the fullest sense of the terms, *power in himself*, without this influence—without any other intervention on the part of God than that of barely sustaining him in being and affording him the light of the gospel, immediately to become evangelically obedient.” p. 240.

Did the writer mean to say, that “man has, in the fullest sense of the terms, *power in himself*, immediately to become evangelically obedient” *independently* of God? If not, why did he say, “with-

out this influence?" By "this influence" he probably meant supernatural influence of the spirit. But is it not a truth that all the "power in himself" which any man has to obey the gospel, consists in a capacity for that purpose, produced by the spirit of God? I conceive that man is wholly dependent on God, on the operations of his spirit, for all the capacity he possesses, for all that "power in himself" of which the Reviewer speaks; and that "without this influence" he would have no capacity or power to obey, and of course nothing would be required of him. There seems to me a want, either of perspicuity or correctness, in what the Reviewer has said on the subject. If by the common influences of the spirit man has "*power in himself*" to obey the gospel, this of course, supersedes the necessity of supernatural influence; but it does not in any degree diminish his dependence, or his obligation. The power of a dependent being cannot be independent power.

In the fourth Letter of Dr. Woods to young ministers, I think he alluded to the very passage in the Spectator on which I have been remarking, or to one of similar import from the same theological school. He thus remarks —

"If you tell the sinner in strong unqualified language that, without the influence of the spirit, he is fully able to repent and obey the gospel; he can ask, and if he believes you will be likely to ask, Why should I then pray for that influence? Why ask such a favor of God when I am perfectly competent to work out my own salvation without it?"

In another paragraph of the same letter Dr. Woods observes —

“Consider now the unqualified assertion, that the sinner has complete ability, unaided by divine grace, to work out his own salvation. — Is such an assertion as this suited to humble the sinner’s pride, or to take away the fond conceit he has of his own sufficiency and independence?”

Though I have questioned the correctness of the passage in the review, I cannot think that the writer meant to express the idea “that the sinner has complete ability, unaided by divine grace, to work out his own salvation.” In my opinion such an idea would be as untrue as the Calvinistic idea of “utter helplessness” and “natural inability.” A man may have “*power in himself*” or “complete ability” to obey the gospel, and yet be perfectly dependent for this ability. Such I believe to be the fact. Had the passage on which Dr. Woods remarked been designed to express the belief that God so fully manifests his favor in the ordinary distributions of his spirit as to render supernatural influence unnecessary, I should have acquiesced in the opinion, though I might still have objected to the form of stating it. But such I think was not the Reviewer’s purpose. While he held to the doctrine, that the sinner “has, in the fullest sense of the terms, *power in himself*” to obey the gospel, he also maintains that special or supernatural influence is necessary to regeneration.

Many worthy men besides Dr. Woods have entertained the opinion, that the sinner has a “fond conceit of his own sufficiency and independence.” But in our country I think it has been much more common for the sinner to imagine that he is so

helpless as to have a good excuse for remaining impenitent. Besides, I do not see that telling him that he cannot repent without a supernatural influence of the divine spirit, has any tendency to *humble his pride*. It may indeed excite the idea that his state is very calamitous; but he will still think that he has some excuse for delay, so long as his capacity to repent remains incomplete, or so long as God withholds the aid which is indispensable to obedience.

As I have advanced the hypothesis that a capacity to obey implies *all* the aids of the spirit which are essential to obedience, it will probably be said that the questions proposed by Dr. Woods may naturally occur in this case,—and that the sinner may ask—“Why should I then pray for that influence? Why ask such a favor of God when I am perfectly competent to work out my own salvation?”

To these queries I may answer. The sinner has no ability of any kind, *natural* or *moral*, which he has not received from God, and which he does not possess in a state of absolute dependence on the divine will. No man is sufficient of himself to think any thing as of himself—all his sufficiency is of God. This is true of every item which pertains to a capacity for obedience. As we are constantly dependent for the whole, the whole or any part of what we now possess may be withdrawn at any succeeding moment. It hence seems to me proper and important, that we should daily feel this dependence, and daily pray for this influence, to aid us in working out our own salvation—just as we

pray "Give us this day our daily bread"—while a present supply of food is now in our hands or within our reach. What we have this hour may be taken from us the next; and we are not only dependent daily for our food, but for strength and appetite to eat it to advantage. This sense of constant dependence on God for every good and perfect gift, may well be expressed in daily petitions for the things we need—or need to have continued to us for our use or benefit.

I think it should be the aim of ministers to convince the sinner that he is dependent for his capacity to obey; and to excite him to call on the Lord for aid with this sense of dependence. Should he do this, the act of prayer, or the volition to pray, may be the first act of that repentance which shall be unto life;—such a volition may be the commencement of a series of humble and penitent volitions which shall be interminable, securing the pardon of his sins, and the salvation of his soul.

The more an impenitent sinner is made to see and to feel that God has given him capacity and aid commensurate with his present duty in ceasing to do evil and learning to do well, the more he will see that delay is inexcusable; and the more deeply he is made to feel that for every thing which pertains to a capacity to repent he is constantly and entirely dependent on God, the more he must feel that to delay is dangerous.

Concluding Remarks.

As it has long been common in our country to impute a dissent from popular opinions on this subject to a want of humility, to self-ignorance and a self-exalting temper, it is hardly to be expected that I shall escape such reproaches. Nor am I disposed to deny that there is in me a deficiency in regard to humility. But so far as I know my own heart, it was not a high opinion of my own purity that led me to adopt the opinions I have expressed, in regard to man's capacity to do what God requires. For no former views of the subject ever exhibited my own moral imperfections in a light so odious and inexcusable, as those which are expressed in the preceding chapters. I may also add, that a view of my own imperfections, as they appear in this glass, has furnished one of the most trying objections which I have had to encounter in the course of the examination. The more clearly my reasonings evinced that every man's capacity to obey must be commensurate with his duty, the more vile my own disobedience and omissions of duty appeared. But this result I have regarded as an argument in favor of the truth of the doctrine, and not of its incorrectness; and as a reason why I should pursue my inquiries, rather than as a reason why I should desist.

The more I have reflected and inquired, the more I have been convinced, that men do not and cannot see their sins in all their odiousness, while they imagine that God never gave them a capacity com-

mensurate with his requirements, or that he has constantly required more of them, in their fallen state, than he has given them a capacity to perform. I have also been convinced, that when men look at their offences through the popular mirror — of *having been born with a nature wholly sinful, by which they were rendered unable to do all that God requires*, they must necessarily have incorrect views not only of sin, but also of God's requirements, and even of his character. For the correctness of these remarks I think I may safely appeal to the conscience of every intelligent and unprejudiced Christian.

I am not acquainted with a better method of coming at the truth in this case, than that of fairly inquiring what must be the effect should an earthly parent adopt the policy which has so commonly been ascribed to God. What would be thought of a father, who is supposed knowingly to require more of his children than they have a capacity to perform? and what would be thought of his precepts? Would he not be deemed impolitic, unreasonable, and even cruel? Would not his precepts be deemed abominable? And is it not certain that the disobedience of his children would be regarded as in a great degree excusable — and so far excusable as the father's precepts transcend their capacity? Shall we then dare to ascribe such a character, such a policy, and such odious precepts to our heavenly Father?

It has been a principal object in what I have written, to vindicate the character of God against such an imputation, as has been implied in the

popular creed; and to exhibit his character and conduct in a light less reproachful and more lovely. Let it however be understood, that I do not impute to any of my fellow Christians the *intention* of reproaching their Maker. They doubtless imagine that he has reasons for the conduct which their opinions ascribe to him; reasons that are concealed from their view, and above human comprehension. Still I believe that their opinions are reproachful to God and injurious to themselves. Indeed I have not a doubt that thousands of them would deem it *slander* should others impute to them such a manner of treating their children as they ascribe to God.

The Messiah, in reference to his own moral precepts, said — “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” But if it were a correct opinion, that under the gospel dispensation more is required of men than they have a capacity to perform, what Peter said of circumcision, in the council of the apostles at Jerusalem, might be said of the gospel precepts. We might justly say of them, that they are “a yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear.” For such surely is the character of every precept which transcends the capacity of the agent to whom it is addressed. Let the ministers of religion then do all they can to eradicate such dishonorable thoughts of God and his gospel.

N. B. Since writing the preceding pages I have had opportunity to examine Dr. B.'s Sermon on Dependence and Free Agency. Some examination of that sermon is contained in what I have written under the title of *Review of the Progress of Opinion*. It is very probable that many ideas in this MS. are repeated in the Review. This could not be avoided while each MS. was considered as a distinct and independent work.



7

Acme
Bookbinding Co., Inc.
100 Cambridge St.
Charlestown, MA 02129



3 2044 037 717 790

~~Handwritten signature or mark~~

